



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

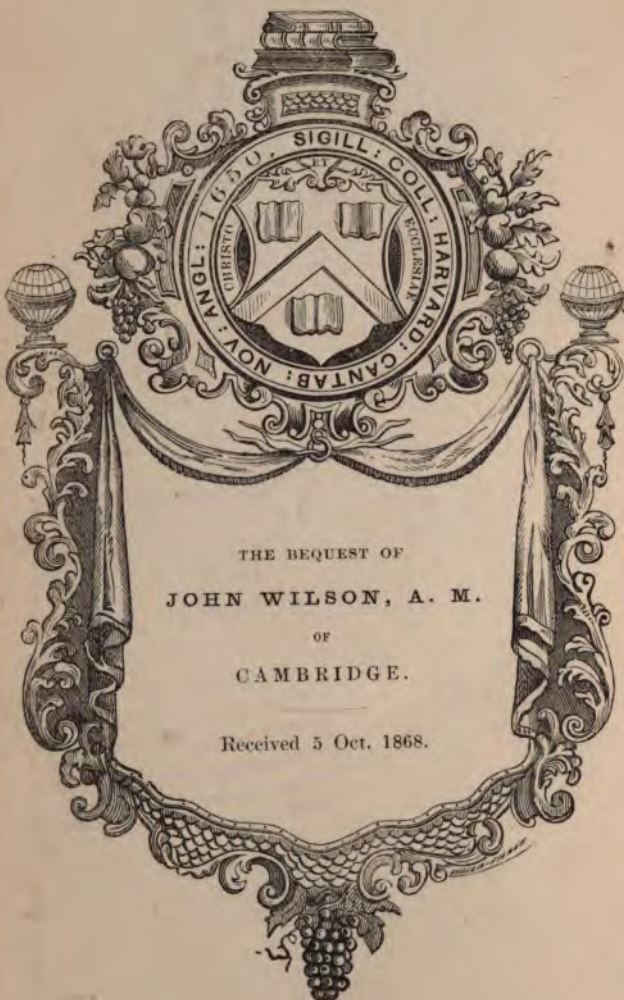
### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

552  
4.35

44.116  
352.44.38

816

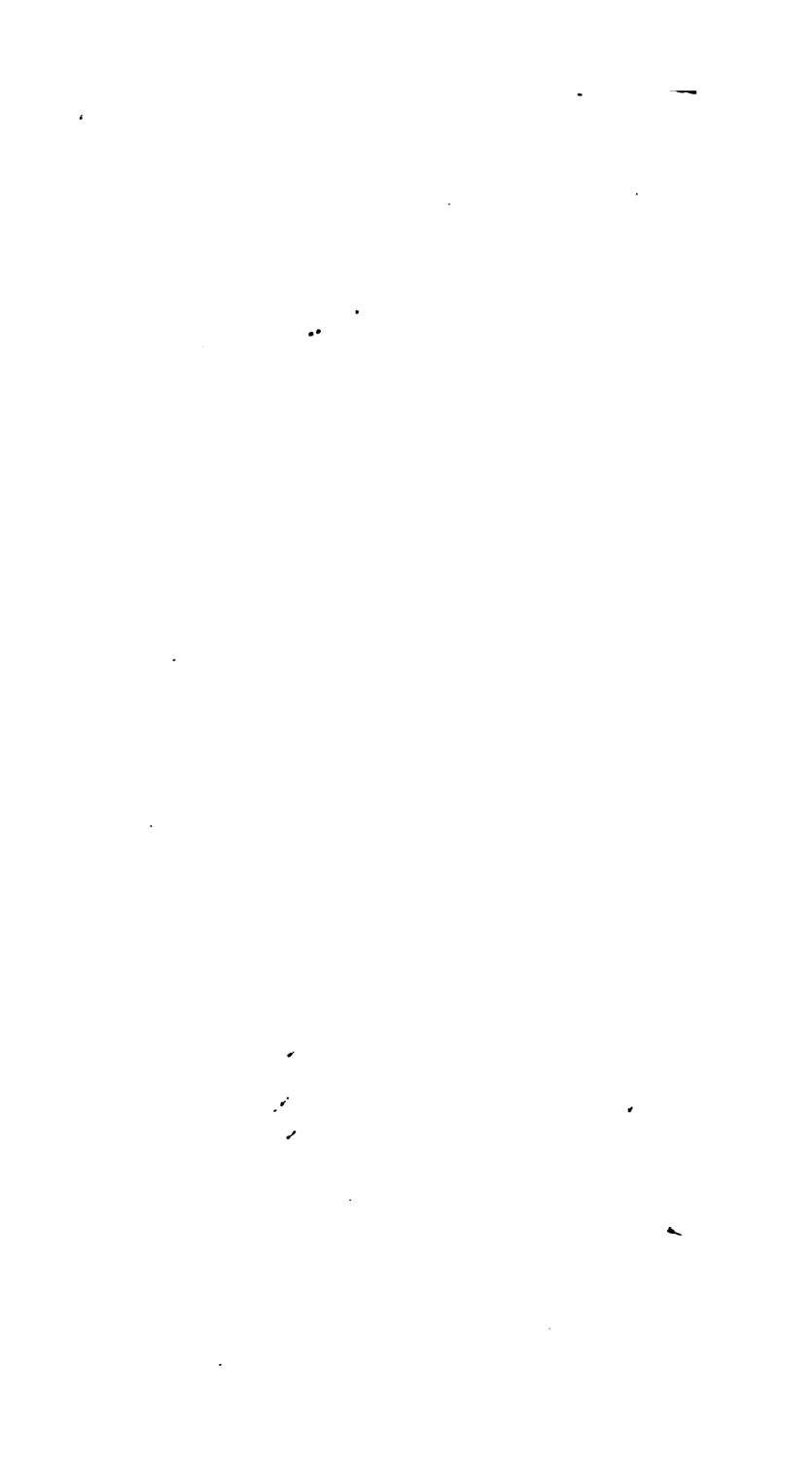


THE REQUEST OF  
JOHN WILSON, A. M.  
OF  
CAMBRIDGE.

Received 5 Oct. 1868.

John Milton





2

LETTERS ON THE TRINITY,  
AND ON  
THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST;  
ADDRESSED TO  
THE REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING,  
IN ANSWER TO HIS SERMON  
"ON THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY."

---

By MOSES STUART,  
ASSOCIATE PROF. OF SAC. LIT. IN THEOL. SEM.  
ANDOVER.

---

WITH A PREFACE,  
BY THE  
REV. ABERCROMBY L. GORDON,  
MINISTER OF GREYFRIARS PARISH, ABERDEEN.

---

NEW EDITION.

**Aberdeen:**

GEORGE KING, 36, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

WAUGH & INNES, AND WILLIAM OLIPHANT, EDINBURGH; JOHN  
REID & CO., GEORGE GALLIE, AND WILLIAM COLLINS, GLAS-  
GOW; THOMAS RICHARDSON, DERBY; WHITTAKER & CO.,  
AND JAMES DINNIS, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXIV.

C 13 52. 14. 35-

✓

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

1868, Oct. 5.

Wilson Bequest.

## P R E F A C E.

---

THE Apostle Paul, in one of the Epistles to his friend and fellow-labourer Timothy, after mentioning the fulfilment of the Divine purpose, in the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, refers to his own appointment as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. In discharging the duties of this sacred office, he experienced many sufferings, and at the very moment of writing his Epistle was in imprisonment at Rome, and in the expectation of a speedy and violent death, in consequence of his determined and uncompromising declaration of revealed truth. "Nevertheless," he adds, "I am not ashamed;"—meaning that he entertained not the feelings of a man who, having hastily adopted certain religious opinions, and brought upon himself ridicule, sufferings, and death, saw at that awful period how vain and foolish had been his former views, and imprudent his conduct—who stood condemned by himself, and abashed in the presence of his fellow-creatures—who regretted his past course, and had a fearful looking for of judgment and eternity. No: whilst in prison, and in the prospect of death, he indulged very different thoughts. "I am not ashamed, for I know," he continues, "in whom I have believed. I am thoroughly convinced of the certainty of the truths which I have myself received, and been declaring to others. I know the authority, the power, the sufficiency of the Saviour. I look with all the confidence of an enlightened and unsubdued conviction, and with all the satisfaction of conscious honesty, upon the testimony which I formerly bore to Christ, and in the prospect of the death which I am soon to undergo, and in the view of the eternity on which I am soon to enter, I rely with perfect confidence on the security of that

foundation, assured that the promise of forgiveness and eternal life, through the mediation of the Son of God, will be fulfilled in me, and in all those who have been partakers of the same grace."

The word of God, and reason, and experience, are all in opposition to the thought, not unfrequently entertained, of a very great change having taken place in the disposition of men towards Christian truth, and towards those who faithfully proclaim it, in comparison with that manifested in the time of the Apostles. The enmity of the carnal mind—that is, of every mind unrenewed by divine grace—remains the same. It may not be carried to the same extent in the outward exhibition of it, nor embodied in the same forms. Still, now, as formerly, it is true that there is a powerful spirit of opposition to the Gospel amongst men—amongst professing Christians—even amongst the inhabitants of England, of Scotland, and of this City. The result also must be the same. As the Apostles were suspected, insulted, persecuted,—the same, with the limitations before described, must be the portion of every man who sets before his fellow-creatures, as he did, the fearful depth of their natural depravity—the number and aggravation of their actual sins—the condemnation to which, on account of them, they are exposed—and who, after an explanation of the divine purpose in a Redeemer, calls upon them all, whether young or old, whether rich or poor, whether reputable or disreputable, in the estimation of the world, "to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold upon the hope set before them in the Gospel." Suspicion, of whatever nature, will certainly be entertained—reproach, of whatever kind, will certainly be thrown upon that man, and in exact proportion to his fearlessness and determination. Even amongst those who profess to entertain the same sentiments, who may be members of that Church of which he is constituted a minister, this spirit will be indulged, and in one form or other will be manifested.

But there is one class of men to whom he will be particularly obnoxious,—Socinian preachers and their followers. The doctrines proclaimed by the faithful ministers of the gospel, especially those which relate to the person and work of the blessed Saviour, are described by these men as having very little autho-

riety of any kind, but especially from reason, to support them ; and the ministers themselves are represented as mere machines, impelled by self-interest, and exhibiting to their simple and deluded congregations, not rational, vivifying, and salutary truths, such as *they* present, but the artificial arrangements of creeds and catechisms. That this is the nature of the religious truths proclaimed to the inhabitants of this city, by its ministers, we have been frequently and in various ways reminded, in the course of last winter ; and the same statements may be again put forth, by those persons who delight so much to dwell on the doctrines of *universal benevolence and charity*.

Now, in such circumstances, the writer of these lines, one of the persons thus assailed, feels strongly disposed to adopt the course and the language of the Apostle, who, as we have seen, when exposed to suspicion and contumely, attacked not others, nor even directly defended himself, but fell back on the entrenchments of faith and hope. So I feel great disinclination to argue truths of a nature so important and all-concerning, in the way and with the spirit of a combatant. Regarding me, as the Apostle did, as a sinful and a dying, and yet immortal creature, I would rather enter on such a question with the feelings of one most deeply interested in the result, and seek to fortify myself against the ungenerous assaults of the enemy, by more narrowly examining my own heart, and planting myself more securely on Christ, the rock of ages. Especially, when such suspicions are entertained by many, and are avowed by not a few, when we hear it alleged that the sentiments of the man are concealed under the garb of the clergyman, I desire to throw it off, and to treat the subject, not with a professional, but personal feeling,—even as one who declares his own convictions, and is anxious to show to others the ground of them,—and all this with the seriousness and solemnity produced by the feeling that he, as well as they, will soon be summoned into an eternal world, and that the most important inquiry for them both now is,—“ What must we do to be saved ? ” It is in such a spirit that, in the midst of surrounding indifference, and of avowed or secret enmity to the grand doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, I would say with the Apostle,—“ Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I

know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

"I know in whom I have believed," says the Apostle, and, like him, I would be justified in maintaining this feeling of confidence and satisfaction on the authority of the Word of God. But the occasional suggestions of one's own mind, and still more the prevailing and practical infidelity of others, render it necessary for me, in order to repose with undisturbed quietness on the power of the Saviour, to go farther, and be satisfied of the unsoundness of all other positions, and of the Scriptures being the only authority in the business of religion: and it will not require much time or effort to be brought to this conclusion. On the subject of religion, it will be very easy to see that the knowledge to which unaided reason is capable of conducting us is a very unsafe guide. It will appear that, even with regard to such simple truths as the existence and attributes of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, it has not led to a consistent or general belief;—that, on the contrary, the most discordant views on both these most important questions have been entertained; whilst, throughout a vast number of the human race, no very intelligible notions with respect to either of these have been found to exist. The power of reason, indeed, even allowing it to have experienced no diminution from any cause, is very limited in these inquiries. It could discover those truths only to which, under the direction of conscience, we may be led in our investigations into the material world, or in the combination and prosecution of the views with which all of us are in some degree naturally impressed. But what our state is before God, how we came into it, for what purpose we are preserved in it, what is afterwards to befall us,—these are questions which, whatever men may pretend to, reason is utterly incapable of solving; and if so, even when its range is most extended, and its flight most free, what must be the result when, as at present, all its powers are darkened and weakened by sin, "when we are alienated from the love of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts?" In short, it is true of religion, above all things, that "he who trusteth his own heart is a fool." He is relying, in the most important of all concerns, on a guide



both ignorant and deceitful, and which, whatever may be the claims advanced for it by its votaries, has done nothing for mankind throughout 6,000 years, but left them nearly at the end of it, as at the beginning, in darkness, degradation, and despair. Survey the religious state of ancient nations when reason was the only guide. Contemplate the condition of Heathen countries at the present time. Observe even our own land, illuminated as it is by the Sun of Righteousness, and mark the religious and moral state of those men in it, who follow reason, as it is called, to the neglect of the Divine record. It is true of them all, that, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

I have been thus taught to distrust reason as my guide to religious truth, and have been led to dwell with unyielding confidence on the sacred Scriptures, as the only depository of the will of God, and the duty and destiny of man. Their claims to this character are numerous and overwhelming. The voice of God therein is evident to the attentive hearer. The system of religious truth which it conveys, so worthy of the infinitely pure, holy, just, and merciful Being, whose attributes and purposes it discloses, and so marvellously adapted to the character and circumstances of man—the uninterrupted continuance of this scheme throughout many, many centuries—the progressive advance of it, until completed in the appearance and propitiation of the Son of God—the perfect uniformity of the truth itself, although under various dispensations—the extraordinary fulfilment of prophecy—the person, the character, the discourses, the prophecies, the miracles of the Saviour, his resurrection and ascension—the triumph of the Cross among Jews and Gentiles—the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion until this day of its inhabitants: on these, as on a very few of the almost innumerable and varied evidences of the Scriptures, as a revelation from God to men, my mind rests with a firm conviction. I consider it not sufficient, however, to have a vague, indefinite impression of the Bible, as given by inspiration of God,—since such an acknowledgment is often made by those who, on examining it with a view to the establishment of their religious principles, pay very little respect to its authority. To no body of men is this remark more justly applicable than those to whom, as Socinians, we have referred.



They receive, they say, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the inspired record of Divine revelation ; but, if they acted consistently with their confession, they would not hesitate to “ cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” That such should be their spirit, in the examination of the sacred volume, is not more in accordance with its own requisitions than those of reason itself, which declares that, if men are permitted to receive or to reject whatever the Divine record contains, according as it may be agreeable, or opposed to their own views of what is rational, the revelation might have been withheld altogether ; for there is not any one of its statements, however certain or essential, which may not be set aside by such capricious mandates ;—even the whole light of the Gospel may be extinguished, by being subjected to such a mode of interpretation. Indeed, so far as these unhappy men are concerned, they are already left in nearly total darkness as to the most important truths in which, as sinful, accountable, and immortal beings, we can be interested. My obvious duty, I repeat, is, upon conviction of the reality of a revelation from God, to seek, with a submissive and a prayerful mind, the knowledge of its truths, assured that whatever may be my opposition to any of them, they are all consonant to the Divine wisdom, goodness, and justice, and “ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.”

Eternity ! What an awful scene does this word set before us—thousands, and thousands, and thousands of years, ceaselessly revolving, and never, even by one point, bringing our existence nearer to a close. With what solemn, earnest, prayerful, and upright minds, should we engage in any inquiry in which our welfare throughout that eternity is involved. And yet, unspeakably solicitous as we should be in such an investigation, we may here pause, and survey the ground we have passed over, assured that hitherto all is safe. We have renounced reason as our instructor in the knowledge of religious truth. We have done it the highest honour, when we sought, as it commands us, after a more authoritative and a surer guide,—and when, after the discovery of it in the Christian revelation, we commence an impar-

tial inquiry into the import of its truths,—and when, having ascertained, we implicitly receive and obey them as the voice of the eternal God. And now, like a child, I sit at the feet of my heavenly Father, and humbly hearken to the declarations of his blessed Word.

It does certainly reveal a fearful change in the character and condition of the human race. It does speak of them as destitute of love to God, as habitual transgressors of his holy, just, and immutable law. It does describe them as guilty in his sight, and under a sentence of righteous condemnation. These truths are set before us in language, the meaning and the force of which it is impossible, unless wilfully, to withstand. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, in that all have sinned.”—“We know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God.” The whole spirit of the Word of God is to this effect. It describes us as upon the brink of a fearful precipice, down which we will be cast at the hour of death, into a place where “there shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” And we are called upon, in every form of entreaty, to flee from the danger, to Him who “came into the world, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

This description it does not give as applicable to the character and condition of a few, or even many, but of all men, without exception. “All have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God.”—“Judgment hath passed upon all men to condemnation.”

The utter worthlessness of all that men can do, to avert our impending doom, is also clearly pointed out. “By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified in the sight of God.” Men may doubt, and rail, and abuse such statements; but they are derived from the Word of God: and I shall only express, with regard to them, a most earnest prayer, that God would enable me and all others more to feel what is therein so unequivocally set forth.

It also makes known a person called Christ, Jesus Christ, the Lord, the Son of God, the Son of Man. Language very different

from that which we have been accustomed to apply to this person has of late been used ; and those employing it seem to consider themselves as the only rational people : others, who entertain altogether opposite views, being represented under a very different character. It is not my purpose, I again declare, to attack others, or even to defend myself, so much as to produce, for my own support, and for the strength and consolation of others, what the Word of God makes known.

For this purpose I had prepared a vast number of Scriptural evidences to the truth of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ—evidences as varied in kind as they were numerous—astonishingly numerous and varied—being presented constantly, and in all the different forms in which we might expect a truth so important, interesting, and practical, to be set before us—evidences too, not confined to the New Testament, but drawn largely from the Old. But I consider it unnecessary to introduce them in the Preface to the following Work, in which this great and glorious truth is so satisfactorily established. I refer the reader therefore to it, only stating my belief of the impossibility of any man reading that Work, with an honest desire to become acquainted with the Revelation of God on this subject, without rising from the perusal with the same conviction as the author of it. If there be meaning in words, and the words of the Bible are to be interpreted as words ordinarily are, there can be no doubt as to the truth which it conveys, respecting the person of Christ, “in whom,” to quote but one passage from it, “dwell-eth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Indeed, the remarkable thing is, that men should profess, as so many do, their belief in the Bible, as conveying a revelation from God, and acknowledge, as by such admission they must also do, their duty humbly to receive what it makes known, and yet maintain that it represents the Lord Jesus Christ as a man in all respects like themselves. The only possible way that Christians have of accounting for such an opinion is, that however these men may acknowledge the Scriptures to be given by inspiration, they yet act as if determined to subject even the inspiration of God to the judgment of their own reason, and to reject whatever in the sacred volume they may thus be led to disapprove. In this light



I have always been disposed to consider Socinianism as farther in advance than the half-way house to infidelity, as I think Wilberforce calls it; and the result, in many avowed instances, and, if we knew all, in many more, would be seen to fulfil this conjecture, as to the proximity of the two systems.

The truth of the Godhead of Christ being established, we are immediately brought to the conclusion of his humiliation, sufferings, and his death, as endured for the benefit of sinners,—as of a mediatorial, but especially of a propitiatory character. Why such a glorious Being should appear in such a form, and undergo such a death, we are able to explain only on this ground. In short, the foundation being replaced, we see the building of gospel truth again rising in all its strength, and harmony, and beauty,—just as when taken away by the Socinians, every other truth falls along with it—the guilt and condemnation of men, the atonement of Christ, the pardon of God, and eternal life vouchsafed in respect of it, and the quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. But, though thus led to it, the Scripture also directly and most evidently makes known this truth of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.—Whether we regard the institution of sacrifices, or the whole Jewish economy, of which sacrifices formed so large a part, or the very numerous, varied, and striking intimations of the truth given us in words such as we find in the fifty-third of Isaiah, we shall be satisfied with the evidence from the Old Testament concerning it. The “testimony of Jesus,” in this view, “is indeed the spirit of prophecy.”—“The prophets inquired what the Spirit of God within them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” It would make another volume, were we to produce evidences from the New Testament of the Lord Jesus having suffered and died in the room of the guilty who believe in him. From the beginning of it, where John the Baptist says,—“Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world,” to the close, where the saints sing a new song, saying,—“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;” and where they ascribe “blessing, and honour, and glory, and

power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever," we find constant, uninterrupted, accumulating evidence to the truth that "He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God."

That God is now willing, in consequence of this propitiation, to pardon sinners, and bestow upon those who repent and believe, eternal life, is also made known so frequently and plainly, as to render numerous evidences of this truth unnecessary. The concluding part of the 5th chapter of 2d Corinthians is the constant doctrine of the Bible on this subject.

That we are unable of ourselves to arrive at the state of repentance which is declared absolutely indispensable to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven; that we are so depraved and insensible as to continue in sin, notwithstanding the revelation of a Saviour, is another doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures. And that God, since "all are dead in trespasses and sins," and therefore in danger (even after the Divine mercy manifested in the Redeemer) of perishing, has chosen some, and brings them by his own power, even by the power of the Holy Spirit, to repentance and faith—"that he saves and calls them with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," is also very plainly a truth of Revelation. It is rejected and despised by the world, it is true, even by the world of professing Christians,—nay, by those who are members of that Church which declares it to be the truth of the Bible, and with whose interpretation in this, as in other respects, they have publicly declared themselves to coincide. The doctrine of election, and of effectual calling, by the Holy Spirit, is ridiculed by such men. But who would care for the opposition of any set of men to the doctrines of the Word of God,—especially of men who with one breath declare their belief in them, and the very next moment represent them as fanatical!

Discovering these doctrines in the Holy Scriptures, which I have before ascertained to be the Word of the eternal God, why should I be ashamed to maintain them? Am I not acting as a reasonable being, in giving credence to the statements of a revelation from the Lord of heaven and earth? Is not this the

very, indeed the only course, to which reason, rightly exercised, will lead? Is not conduct of every other kind, in the business of religion, most foolish and insane, and that of which alone men should be ashamed?

But, whilst standing immoveable upon this ground,—whilst maintaining, upon the authority of God's Revelation, these truths, and caring not for the opposition made to them by men, whether of other Churches or by Socinians, as if they were not in accordance with the dictates of reason,—we yet say, at the same time, that they are not only agreeable to, but confirmed by reason. Do I, for example, need proofs from this quarter of the depravity and wickedness of man? I look within me, around me—to ancient, to modern times—to Heathen, and to Christian nations. Am I assailed by those who represent my statements of the misery of man as both unworthy of our ideas of the Divine benevolence, and as not descriptive of their actual situation? I look around and behold the “whole creation groaning and travailing in pain.” I observe their disappointments, their dissatisfaction, their utter and universal wretchedness. I hear of some of them dying every moment, and see them all hastening to the grave. Oh! what a scene of vanity and death does this world present!—Yes, Socinians, this world, made by a wise and a benevolent God. Representations of this sort inconsistent with rational views of God, forsooth! Let former generations be appealed to—let the present be enquired at. The language of both, and still more their feelings, if embodied in language, would confirm the Scriptural truth conveyed in one of the catechisms, at which Socinians and other *rational* Christians have such a horror, and which states that, “having lost all communion with God, we are under the wrath and curse of God,—subject to all the miseries of this life, to death itself,”—

“And to the pains of hell for ever.” This is the view to which, say they, we most strongly object. It is the Word of God, and that should be sufficient, we reply. “Everlasting fire—the worm that dieth not,” are certainly spoken of there. Therein, assuredly, eternal misery is described as the portion of an impenitent immortal. You may affect the strongest repugnance to—you may profess entire disbelief of this statement. I cannot help it.



“ Let God be true, and every man a liar.” But *is* there ground in reason for such notions, I ask? Why, my reason tells me that there is no happiness for a creature such as man but in God ; and that, if miserable without him in this world, and leaving it without being reconciled to him, he must be for ever and for ever miserable. The conscience also of the sinner loudly proclaims the same truth, and forces him, whatever the devil and the world may suggest to the contrary, to entertain “ a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” If the *rational* Christian still persist in declaring these not to be in accordance with right views of the Divine nature, I leave him to solve the difficulty the best way he can. That such is the actual condition of mankind there is every evidence. Is he prepared, then, since his reason, his conscience, and his very senses testify to these things, to impeach the wisdom, the power, the goodness of God, under whose government they are seen to exist?

That the doctrine of an atonement such as Christ made, and the proffer of great blessings from God to man as the consequence of it, is agreeable to reason, to the tenour of Divine Providence, and even to the common views of mankind, as manifested in their sacrifices to God, and in their intercourse with one another, may be seen most satisfactorily set forth in Butler’s Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion, to which I refer the reader.

That we are justified, or pardoned and accepted through faith, is also a doctrine which, the more it is considered in all its bearings, will the more strongly recommend itself as the only way by which such a blessing can be conveyed to the sinner, and change of heart and holiness at the same time secured. And that no man can repent and believe but by the Holy Spirit, and that every real Christian is born again by its power, is another Scriptural truth which reason not only approves, when discovered, but is led to infer.\*

Under such convictions of their authority, do I proclaim these fearfully despised truths, being not ashamed. And, on farther consideration of their design and tendency, I am sustained in

\* See, for example, Dr. Abercrombie’s Philosophical Work, entitled “ Inquiries concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth,” pp. 438, 439, fourth edition.

this feeling, as the Apostle showed himself to be, when, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he exclaims,—“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” On the reception of Christ, pardon is bestowed on the guilty sinner; and the principle by which this blessing is conveyed is constituted, at the same time, the means of enlightening his understanding, purifying his heart, raising him from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, delivering him, in short, from the condemnation and power of sin. Lastly, the effects produced, in the grace of God, by the promulgation of the gospel—the change of heart—the holiness of life—“the righteousness, the peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,” which it has diffused amongst numbers, the amount of which will remain unknown till we are all summoned, in the last day, into the presence of God—also lead me to glory, and not be ashamed, in declaring truths at once so certain, and leading to such results.

Glorious Gospel! revealing a Saviour to guilty, miserable, and helpless man—a Deliverer from all the evils that sin has brought upon him—a Restorer to more than the happiness he has forfeited. Ashamed of the gospel! Yes: I am ashamed that I have valued it so little—that I have not more faithfully proclaimed it, and disclosed more of its “unsearchable riches.” For this cause should I and every minister of it be ashamed and deeply humbled, but for no other cause. Rather would we glory in it, “counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.” Let those men be ashamed, who, in the awful concerns of religion, trust to the conclusions of their own darkened and deceitful reason, and their own wicked hearts, or who profess to receive, as inspired, the sacred Scriptures, and either deny or ridicule the most plainly revealed and important doctrines which they contain—whose system, if it can be so called, is without foundation in reason or the Word of God, reveals no way of sure and peaceful access to their Maker, leads to no difference in their state before him, nor any radical change in their own hearts. It is of such a false and



fruitless, and, I will add, such a prevailing religion as this, and not of the everlasting gospel, that men should be ashamed.

But though, in order to sustain myself unmoved in the declaration of the great truths of the gospel, amidst the indifference and opposition which they so generally meet with, I have thus examined them, it must be acknowledged that every feeling of shame will not be excluded from the mind of one who merely refers to such authorities. It is very true that, so far as the understanding of the sinner is consulted on these truths, he may defend them firmly, and even glory in them, as completely in accordance with its unsophisticated dictates. But, if he rely upon this ground alone, he will find himself not altogether uninfluenced by this sense of shame in the maintenance of the gospel. If his heart continue unchanged, whatever may be the conclusions of the intellect, such a feeling will certainly be present. If he remain, as he naturally is, blind to the evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin, especially as these affect himself, and if he behold not the Lord Jesus Christ by this light, even as that glorious and for ever blessed and compassionate Being, who, when he was under the righteous condemnation of God, humbled himself on his account, and became obedient unto the death of the cross, and suffered in his stead, that he might receive forgiveness and eternal life—if he be not thus enabled to contemplate these truths, assuredly, to whatever height of triumph in the vindication of them he may rise, when he employs the former means, he will fall again, and in one way or other be ashamed of them. And such instances, I am persuaded, do frequently occur. Not until the heart of the sinner is changed—not until he is laid low in the presence of God—not until he sees his original depravity, the multitude, the variety, the complication, the aggravated nature of his sins—not until, under the burden of them, he sees himself sinking into eternal perdition, and from this depth apprehend the mercy of God in Christ, and laying hold upon him, trust in him, and rejoice in him—not until this union shall have taken place, can any man truly say with the Apostle, “I am not ashamed,” and look to Christ as him, “whom having not seen, he loves, and in whom, though now he sees him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy

unspeakable and full of glory." Left to themselves, the Jews rejected every evidence of Christ's divinity, though they could not disprove it; but, wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, they uttered the striking language, which has been referred to, in the fifty-third of Isaiah, saying,—Once "we hid, as it were, our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. But" now we see "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." And it was not until a similar change by the same Almighty Agent had been produced on the mind of the Apostle that he could say,—“Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift,” and declared he was not ashamed, knowing in whom he had believed. And happy are those ministers of the gospel, who, in addition to all the other elements of their knowledge of Christ, have received this gift from God, by which these are combined and formed into principles of spiritual life and action, even “the unction from the Holy One, by which they know all things,” (1 John i. 20;) and, on experiencing which,

“They, unashamed, in the gate,  
Shall speak unto their foes.”

In this feeling of confidence would I cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, when, as we have lately witnessed in this city, very different views of Christian truth are presented; and when, as upon that occasion, the ministers of the gospel are described as declaring what is in accordance neither with Scripture nor reason, but only with the arbitrary standards of a national religion. We are not ashamed, knowing, for other reasons than those which are ascribed to us, in whom we have believed.

The great truth to which I have last referred—the necessity of a divine influence, in order to produce those views of Christ and of his gospel which will enable us to remain firm and unashamed in our adherence to him—suggests most important preliminary instruction for the reader of this Work. It is a common and a just remark, that the cause of infidelity is not in a want of evidences to the Christian religion, but in the awful prejudices of the heart. “Light has come into the world,” says the blessed Saviour, “and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Until the Holy Spirit remove this obstacle, the

evidences of Christianity, although they may be presented with all the power with which reason, and learning, and eloquence, can enforce them, will produce no real effect. The remark is equally true in its application to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, especially to the doctrine which is here considered. The proofs of it from Scripture may be seen in the clearest light ; it may be set before the reader in the most convincing form ; his reason, in short, may be satisfied, but his heart will, unless touched by the Spirit of God, remain opposed to it, and himself utterly unaffected by the very truth—which he cannot, except by mere assertion, deny—that “ unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE.” “ No man,” in short, says an Apostle, “ can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.” Flesh and blood cannot reveal this truth to any man. It must, as it was to Peter, be revealed by our Father who is in heaven. It is with this impression that I would implore any whose sentiments may yet be undetermined, or who may have been in any degree influenced by the late unholy attempts in this place, to enter upon the perusal of the following Work. Whilst they consider that it is not a mere opinion which is involved, but that the salvation of their immortal souls depends on the reception which they give to him who is “ the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” and except by whom “ no one cometh to the Father,”—whilst they should engage in the investigation of this truth, with such a feeling of its importance and their own responsibility, and exercise, as the Bereans did, their reason in the examination of the Scriptures, in order to ascertain whether it is in accordance with them,—let them not, we repeat, rest satisfied with a temporary conviction, but accompany their inquiries with earnest prayer, “ that He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, would shine into their minds, and give them the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” And as, in the commencement of these remarks, I adduced the words of an Apostle, and gave utterance to my own views in his language, so now would I say with him, on behalf of those who may open these pages,—“ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father

f our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man,—that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,—that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,—that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

A. L. G.

ABERDEEN, *May*, 1834.





## LETTER I.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE recently perused a sermon delivered by you at the ordination of the Reverend J. Sparks, in Baltimore, with no small degree of interest. The subjects of which it treats must be regarded as highly important, by every intelligent man who is a serious inquirer after revealed truth. And if the views which you have disclosed will stand the test of examination, and shall appear to be those which the Word of God maintains, or which it will justify, it certainly will be the duty of every friend to Christianity to embrace and promote them.

It is proper, no doubt, that every one who reads and reflects upon your sermon, should do it without prejudice or party views. Unless I am deceived as to the state of my own feelings, I have endeavoured impartially to weigh the arguments, and examine the reasonings which it presents, with a wish to know and believe the truth. I dare not flatter myself, indeed, that I have perfectly succeeded in doing this; for every man who is acquainted with his own heart, will find reason to believe that he often has been, and may be again, deceived by it. But, as I am not conscious of party feelings on the present occasion, will you permit me, without apology, to lay before you my thoughts in regard to three topics of your discourse that stand in close connexion with each other, and are among the principal points in regard to which I feel myself compelled to dissent from your opinions.

The points to which I refer are—the *principles of interpreting Scripture*; the *unity of God*; and the *divinity and humanity of the Saviour*. I limit myself to these three, because it would require more time and labour than I can possibly spare at present, and more health than I enjoy, to express in writing my views of all the statements of doctrines which you have made. I might adduce another reason for confining myself within these limits. If the

principles of reasoning which you adopt, and the results which you deduce from them, in regard to some of the points on which I am about to remark, are untenable or incorrect, the consequence of this must extend itself *essentially* to some of the remaining and most important topics which you have discussed in your sermon.

The general principles of interpreting Scripture you describe in the following manner :—

“ We regard the Scriptures as the records of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection. Our religion, we believe, lies chiefly in the New Testament. The dispensation of Moses, compared with that of Jesus, we consider as imperfect, earthly, obscure, adapted to the childhood of the human race, a preparation for a nobler system, and chiefly useful now as serving to confirm and illustrate the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians; and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired Apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives.

“ This authority which we give to the Scriptures, is a reason, we conceive, for studying them with peculiar care, and for inquiring anxiously into the principles of interpretation, by which their true meaning may be ascertained. The principles adopted by the class of Christians in whose name I speak, need to be explained, because they are often misunderstood. We are particularly accused of making an unwarrantable use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. We are said to exalt reason above revelation, to prefer our own wisdom to God's. Loose and undefined charges of this kind are circulated so freely, and with such injurious intentions, that we think it due to ourselves, and to the cause of truth, to express our views with some particularity.

“ Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books. We believe that God, when he condescends to speak and write, submits, if we may so say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us, more than if communicated in an unknown tongue?

“ Now, all books and all conversation require in the reader or hearer the constant exercise of reason; or their true import is only to be obtained by continual comparison and inference. Human language, you well know, admits various interpretations; and every word and every sentence must be modified and explained—according to the subject which is discussed—according to the purposes, feelings, circumstances, and principles of the writer, and according to the genius and idioms of the language which he uses. These are acknowledged principles in the interpretation of human writings; and a man whose words we should explain without reference to these principles, would reproach us justly

with a criminal want of candour, and an intention of obscuring or distorting his meaning.

“ Were the Bible written in a language and style of its own, did it consist of words which admit but a single sense, and of sentences wholly detached from each other, there would be no place for the principles now laid down. We could not reason about it as about other writings. But such a book would be of little worth; and perhaps, of all books, the Scriptures correspond least to this description.

“ The word of God bears the stamp of the same hand which we see in his works. It has infinite connexions and dependencies. Every proposition is linked with others, and is to be compared with others, that its full and precise import may be understood. Nothing stands alone. The New Testament is built on the Old. The Christian dispensation is a continuation of the Jewish, the completion of a vast scheme of providence, requiring great extent of view in the reader. Still more, the Bible treats of subjects on which we receive ideas from other sources besides itself; such subjects as the nature, passions, relations, and duties of man; and it expects us to restrain and modify its language by the known truths which observation and experience furnish on these topics.

“ We profess not to know a book which demands a more frequent exercise of reason than the Bible. In addition to the remarks now made on its infinite connexions, we may observe that its style nowhere affects the precision of science, or the accuracy of definition. Its language is singularly glowing, bold, and figurative, demanding more frequent departures from the literal sense than that of our own age and country, and consequently demands more continual exercise of judgment. We find, too, that the different portions of this book, instead of being confined to general truths, refer perpetually to the times when they were written, to states of society, to modes of thinking, to controversies in the Church, to feelings and usages which have passed away, and without the knowledge of which we are constantly in danger of extending to all times and places what was of temporary and local application. We find, too, that some of these books are strongly marked by the genius and character of their respective writers, that the Holy Spirit did not so guide the Apostles as to suspend the peculiarities of their minds, and that a knowledge of their feelings, and of the influences under which they were placed, is one of the preparations for understanding their writings. With these views of the Bible, we feel it our bounden duty to exercise our reason upon it perpetually, to compare, to infer, to look beyond the letter to the spirit, to seek, in the nature of the subject and the aim of the writer his true meaning; and, in general, to make use of what is known, for explaining what is difficult, and for discovering new truths.

“ Need I descend to particulars to prove that the Scriptures demand the exercise of reason? Take, for example, the style in which they generally speak of God, and observe how habitually they apply to him human passions and organs. Recollect the declarations of Christ, that he came not to send peace, but a sword; that unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us; that we must hate father and mother; pluck out the right eye; and a vast number of passages equally bold and unlimited. Recollect the unqualified manner in which it is said



of Christians that they possess all things, know all things, and can do all things. Recollect the verbal contradiction between Paul and James, and the apparent clashing of some parts of Paul's writings, with the general doctrines and end of Christianity. I might extend the enumeration indefinitely, and who does not see that we must limit all these passages by the known attributes of God, of Jesus Christ, and of human nature, and by the circumstances under which they were written, so as to give the language a quite different import from what it would require, had it been applied to different beings, or used in different connexions.

"Enough has been said to show in what sense we make use of reason in interpreting Scripture. From a variety of possible interpretations, we select that which accords with the nature of the subject, and the state of the writer, with the connexion of the passage, with the general strain of Scripture, with the known character and will of God, and with the obvious and acknowledged laws of nature. In other words, we believe that God never contradicts, in one part of Scripture, what he teaches in another, and never contradicts, in revelation, what he teaches in his works and providence; and we therefore distrust every interpretation which, after deliberate attention, seems repugnant to any established truth. We reason about the Bible precisely as civilians do about the constitution under which we live; who, you know, are accustomed to limit one provision of that venerable instrument by others, and to fix the precise import of its parts by inquiring into its general spirit, into the intentions of its authors, and into the prevalent feelings, impressions, and circumstances of the time when it was framed. Without these principles of interpretation, we frankly acknowledge that we cannot defend the divine authority of the Scriptures. Deny us this latitude, and we must abandon this book to its enemies." pp. 3—6.

To a great part of these principles I give my cheerful and most cordial assent. They are the principles which I apply to the explanation of the Scriptures from day to day, in my private studies and in my public labours. They are the principles by which I am led to embrace the opinions that I have espoused, and by which, so far as I am able, I expect to defend these opinions, whenever called in duty to do it.

While I thus give my cordial approbation to most of the above extract from your sermon, will you indulge me in expressing a wish that the rank and value of the Old Testament, in the Christian's library, had been described in somewhat different terms? I do most fully accord with the idea that the gospel, or the New Testament, is more perfect than the Mosaic Law, or than the Old Testament. On what other ground can the assertions of Paul, in 2d Corinthians, iii., in Hebrews, viii., and in other places, be believed or justified? The gospel gives a clearer view

than the Jewish Scriptures of our duty, and of our destiny,—of the objects of our hopes and fears—of the character of God and the way of salvation. I agree fully, that whatever in the Old Testament respects the Jews, simply as Jews,—*e. g.*, their ritual, their food, their dress, their civil polity, their government—in a word, whatever from its nature was *national* and *local*,—is not binding upon us under the Christian dispensation.

I am well satisfied, too, that the character of God and the duty of men were, in many respects, less clearly revealed under the ancient dispensation than they now are. “The law was given by Moses ;” but “no man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten, who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, *he hath revealed him*,”—*i. e.*, it was reserved for Christ to make a *full* display of the divine character ;—no man, no prophet, who preceded him, ever had such knowledge of God as enabled him to do it. I am aware that many Christians do not seem to understand this passage ; and, with well-meaning but mistaken views, undertake to deduce the character and designs of God as fully and as clearly from the Old Testament as from the New.

I must believe, too, that the *duties* of Christians are, in most respects, more fully and definitely taught in the gospel than in the Old Testament ; and I cannot approve of that method of reasoning which deduces our duties principally from texts in the Old Testament that sometimes are less clear, when the New Testament presents the same subjects in such characters of light that he who runneth may read.

But when you say, “Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians ; and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired Apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives,” does not this naturally imply that we are absolved from obligation to receive the Old Testament, in any sense as our guide ; and that what it teaches, we are not bound “to make the rule of our lives ?” I do not feel certain that it was your design to affirm this ; but the words in their connexion seem naturally to bear this import. To such a view I should object, that those parts of the Old

Testament which express the will of God, in reference to the great points of duty, that must, from the nature of moral beings, be for ever the same under every dispensation, may be and ought to be regarded as unrepealed. It is a very sound maxim, in the interpretation of divine as well as human laws,—*manente ratione, manet ipsa lex*,—*a law is unrepealed, while the reason of that law continues*. Express repeal only can exempt a law from the application of this maxim. And when our Saviour says, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled," he seems to me plainly to have declared the immutability of the ancient *moral* law, in the sense already explained.

What shall we say, moreover, of the devotional parts of the Old Testament (the Book of Psalms, for instance), or of those numerous prophetic parts which are sermons on the duties and obligations of men, or of predictions of a future Messiah, and of the nature and prosperity of his Church? Are these any more Jewish (except as to the garb in which they are clothed) than Christian? I admit that they are less perfect than that which the New Testament furnishes on the same topics; but I believe them to be sanctioned by the same authority, and to require a similar respect and deference.

In regard to what you say respecting the leading principle of interpreting Scripture, I cannot hesitate to declare, that nothing is clearer to my apprehension, than that God, when he speaks to men, speaks in such language as is used by those whom he addresses. Of course, the language of the Bible is to be interpreted by the same laws, so far as philology is concerned, as that of any other book. I ask with you, How else is the Bible a *revelation*? How else can men ever come to agree in what manner the Scripture should be interpreted, or feel any assurance that they understand the meaning of its language?

I find little from which I should dissent in the remainder of your observations upon the general *principles* of interpretation. I might perhaps make some objections to the manner in which the office of reason, in the interpretation of Scripture, is occasionally described. But I am confident that I admit, as fully as you do or can do, the



*proper office* of reason in the whole matter of religion, both in regard to doctrine and practice. It is to our reason that the arguments which prove the divine origin of Christianity are addressed; and it is by reason that we prove, or are led to admit, this origin, on general or historical grounds. Reason prescribes, or at any rate developes and sanctions, the laws of interpreting Scripture. The cases mentioned by you, in which reason must be exercised, are in general striking exemplifications of this. But when reason is satisfied that the Bible is the book of God, by proof which she cannot reject, and yet preserve her character—and when she has decided what laws of exegesis\* the nature of human language requires—the office that remains for her, in regard to the Scripture, is the application of those laws to the actual interpretation of the Bible. When, by their application, she becomes satisfied with respect to what the sacred writers really meant to declare in any case, she admits it without hesitation, whether it be a doctrine, the relation of a fact, or a precept. It is the highest office of reason to believe doctrines and facts which God has asserted to be true, and to submit to his precepts, —although many things, in regard to the manner in which those facts and doctrines can be explained, or those precepts vindicated, may be beyond her reach. In short, the Scriptures being once admitted to be the Word of God, or of divine authority, the sole office of reason in respect to them is to act as an *interpreter* of revelation, and not in any case as a *legislator*. Reason can only judge of the laws of exegesis, and direct the application of them, in order to discover simply what the sacred writers meant to assert. This being discovered, it is either to be received as they have asserted it, or their divine authority must be rejected, and our obligation to believe all which they assert, denied. There is no other alternative. Philosophy has no right to interfere here. If she ever interferes, it must be when the question is pending, whether the Bible is divine. Nor has system, prejudice, sectarian feeling, orthodoxy, or heterodoxy, so called, any right to interfere. The claims of the Bible to be authoritative being once admit-

\* A term of frequent occurrence with expositors and Biblical critics. It signifies examination or interpretation.

ted, the simple question in respect to it is, What does it teach? In regard to any particular passage, What idea did the original writer mean to convey? When this is ascertained by the legitimate rules of interpretation, it is authoritative,—this is *orthodoxy* in the highest and best sense of the word; and every thing which is opposed to it, which modifies it, which fritters its meaning away, is *heterodoxy*, is *heresy*, to whatever name or party it is attached.

I presume you will agree without hesitation to these remarks. The grand Protestant maxim, that *the Bible is our only and sufficient rule of faith and practice*, implies most clearly the very same principles which I have stated; and these every man must admit, that acknowledges the paramount claims of the Bible to be believed, and has any tolerable acquaintance with the subject of its interpretation.

If there be any thing to which I should object in your statement, generally considered, of the laws of interpretation, it is rather the colouring which has been given to some of the language in which it is expressed. You commence by saying, that your party are charged with “exalting reason above revelation—with preferring their own wisdom to God’s;” and that these charges are “circulated freely, and with injurious intentions.” You will readily acknowledge, as a general fact, that there is difficulty in giving an impartial statement of opinions, which we thus strongly feel to have been misrepresented. We certainly are under temptation, in such cases, to set off our own opinions to the best advantage, and to place those of our opponents in the most repulsive attitude. And although Trinitarians, in fact, differ less from you, in respect to the laws of interpretation, than you seem to have apprehended, the belief, on your part, that a wider difference existed, seems to have given a peculiar cast to some sentences which simple discussion would hardly admit.

With the two last paragraphs of your sermon that are quoted above, I wish not to be understood as signifying that I entirely agree. It is, however, rather from the *application* of some exegetical principles which is made in them, than from the principles themselves, that I dissent.

I shall have occasion to remark hereafter on this subject. I have mentioned it now, merely to prevent any mistake with regard to the meaning of what I say here upon the laws of interpretation, as exhibited by you.

It would have given me pleasure to find you unconditionally admitting that the general principles of interpretation which you defend are not original, nor peculiar to your party. But you seem to qualify this, by saying that "*all Christians, OCCASIONALLY adopt them.*" If I understand you rightly, then, you would concede, that only Unitarians admit substantially the *system of exegesis* which you have described, and practise upon it. In this, however (if this be your meaning), you are mistaken,—at least it appears plainly so to me, in respect to the divines of New England, who, at the present time are called *orthodox*.\* I doubt whether any man can study the science of interpretation, for a considerable time together, without adopting those *principles* of it, *for substance*, which you seem to claim appropriately for Unitarians.

How can it be explained, then, supposing you and I are both sincerely seeking after truth, and both adopt, for substance, the same maxims of interpretation, that we should differ so widely in the results that flow from the application of these principles? Perhaps some light may be cast upon this question in the sequel of these Letters.

\* This remark may be extended so as to include all those writers in this country who are usually denominated orthodox or evangelical.



## LETTER II.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

It would be very gratifying to find, in your sermon, as much respecting the doctrine of the Trinity with which I might accord, as in your principles of interpretation. My apprehensions respecting this doctrine, however, differ from yours. It is not without examination and reflection that I have embraced my present views of it; and the perusal of your statement of the doctrine in question, and your arguments against it, have not persuaded me that my views are erroneous.

You will not expect me, however, in these Letters, which are intended to be brief, to go into a discussion of this great subject which shall embrace all the important topics which it presents. I intend to touch on those points only on which the hinge of the controversy seems to me to turn; and on these in a manner as summary as the nature and difficulty of the case will permit.

The statement which you make of your own faith in regard to the unity of God, and your account of the doctrine of the Trinity, are as follow:—

“*First.* We believe in the doctrine of GOD’s UNITY, or that there is one God, and one only. To this truth we give infinite importance, and we feel ourselves bound to take heed, lest any man spoil us of it by vain philosophy. The proposition, *that there is one God*, seems to us exceedingly plain. We understand by it, that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong. We conceive that these words could have conveyed no other meaning to the simple and uncultivated people who were set apart to be the depositaries of this great truth, and who were utterly incapable of understanding those hair-breadth distinctions between *being* and *person*, which the sagacity of latter ages has discovered. We find no intimation that this language was to be taken in an unusual sense, or that God’s unity was a quite different thing from the oneness of other intelligent beings.

“We object to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it subverts the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other’s society.

They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator, and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here then we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed. It is difference of properties, and acts, and consciousness, which leads us to the belief of different intelligent beings, and if this mark fail us, our whole knowledge fails,—we have no proof that all the agents and persons in the universe are not one and the same mind. When we attempt to conceive of three Gods, we can do nothing more than represent to ourselves three agents, distinguished from each other by similar marks and peculiarities to those which separate the persons of the Trinity; and when common Christians hear these persons spoken of as conversing with each other, loving each other, and performing different acts, how can they help regarding them as different beings, different minds?" pp. 8, 9.

My object in *this* letter is not to controvert your creed, but to consider your representation of the doctrine of the Trinity, as stated, believed, and defended by those with whom I am accustomed to think and act.

Admitting that you have given a fair account of our belief, I cannot see, indeed, why we are not virtually guilty of Tritheism,\* or at least of something which approximates so near to it, that I acknowledge myself unable to distinguish it from Tritheism. But I cannot help feeling that you have made neither an impartial nor a correct statement of what we believe, and what we are accustomed to teach and defend.

It needs but a moderate acquaintance with the history of the doctrine in question to satisfy any one that a great variety of explanations have been attempted by inquisitive, or by adventurous minds. All acknowledge the difficulty of the subject; I regret to say, that some have not refrained from treating it as though it were more within their comprehension than it is.

But, among all the different explanations which I have found, I have not met with any one which denied, or at least was designed to deny, the UNITY OF GOD. All admit this to be a fundamental principle: All acknowledge that it is designated in characters of light, both in the

\* The worship of three Gods.



Jewish and Christian revelations; and that to deny it would be the grossest absurdity, as well as impiety.

It may indeed be questioned whether the explanations given of the doctrine of the Trinity by some who have speculated on this subject are consistent with the divine unity, when the language which they use is interpreted agreeably to the common laws of exegesis. But, that their representations were not *designed* to call in question the *divine unity*, is what I think every candid reader of their works will be disposed to admit.

Now, when I consider this fact, so plain and so easily established, and then look at the method in which you state the doctrine of the Trinity, as exhibited above, I confess it gives me pain to think that you have not conceded or even intimated that Trinitarians do or can admit the unity of God. You have a right to say, if you so think, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as they explain and defend it, is at variance with the *divine unity*, and that these two things are inconsistent with each other. But, to appropriate to those solely who call themselves Unitarians, the belief that there is but one God—or to construct an account of the Trinitarian creed (as it seems to me you have done in the paragraph on which I am remarking), so as not even to intimate to your hearers or readers that your opponents admit or advocate the *divine unity*—is doing that which you would censure in an antagonist, and which cannot well serve the interests of truth.

But let us examine your statement of our creed.

“ We object to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it subverts the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption,—each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is Mediator, and not the Father; the Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here then we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed.” p. 9.

Is not this account a very different one, from that which many of your brethren are accustomed to give of us? By them it is said, that there is a great discordance and contradictory statements and explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity among those who embrace it. Do not you amalgamate us altogether, make us harmonious Tritheists, and then give us over to the reproach of Tritheism, or at least of glaring inconsistency?

After all, the statement which you exhibit of our views is very far from that which we (or at least all Trinitarians with whom I am acquainted) make of our belief. I do not deny that *some* writers have given grounds for a statement not very diverse from yours, as it regards the doctrine of the Trinity. Even some great and good men, in their zeal to defend this doctrine, have sought to reduce the whole subject to human comprehension. How vain the attempt, experience has demonstrated. Efforts of this nature, however well designed or ably conducted, never yet have led to any thing but greater darkness. "Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"

But though I readily admit, that efforts to explain what in the nature of the case is inexplicable, may have misled some in their exertions to acquire religious knowledge, or given occasion to others of stumbling, yet I am not prepared to admit that the great body of Trinitarians have given just occasion to charge them with a denial of the *unity of God*, or with opinions subversive of this. You certainly ought not to deny them the same liberty, in the use of terms, which all men take on difficult subjects, for the accurate description of which language is not framed, perhaps is not in its nature adequate. They must discuss such subjects by using figurative language, by using terms which (if I may be indulged the liberty of speaking thus) *approximate* as nearly to the expression of the ideas that they mean to convey, as any which they can select. If there is any obscurity in these general observations, I hope it will be cleared up in the remarks that are to follow.

Since I refuse assent to your statement of our belief, you will feel a right to inquire what we do believe, that

you may compare this with the doctrine of divine unity, and judge for yourself whether it is subversive of it or not. I cannot refuse my assent to a proposal so reasonable ; nor do I feel any inclination to shrink from the task of stating our belief, and then to proffer the excuse, that every thing respecting the subject is too mysterious and recondite to be the object of distinct contemplation. What we do believe can be stated—what we do *not* profess to define or explain can be stated, and the reasons why we do not attempt definition or explanation ; and this is what I shall now attempt.

I must not, however, be understood as pledging myself that those, in general, with whom I am accustomed to think and act, will adopt my statement, and maintain that it exhibits the best method of explaining or defending the great doctrine in question. Notwithstanding we are so often charged with adherence to forms and modes of expression contained in creeds, we use as great a variety of language, in giving instruction with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, as with respect to the other doctrines of religion. In regard to the statement which I shall make, I can say only, that it is not the result of concert, in any degree, with my clerical brethren, for the purpose of making a statement to which they will adhere. It is the result of investigation, and reflection on the subject, as it appears to be exhibited in the Scriptures, and in the writings of the leading divines whom I have been able to consult.

I believe, then,

I. That God is *ONE* ; *numerically one, in essence and attributes*. In other words,—the infinitely perfect Spirit, the Creator and preserver of all things, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has *numerically the same essence*, and the *same perfections*, so far as they are known to us. To particularize ; the Son possesses not simply a *similar* or *equal* essence and perfections, but *numerically the same* as the Father, without division, and without multiplication.

II. The Son (and also the Holy Spirit), does in some respect, *truly* and *really*, not merely nominally or logically, differ from the Father.

I am aware, as I have hinted above, that you may find writers upon the doctrine of the Trinity, who have stated the subject of my first proposition in a manner somewhat different. But, after making due allowance for inatten-



tion to precision of language, the difficulty of the subject and the various ways which men naturally take to illustrate a difficult subject, I am not aware that many of them would dissent substantially from the statement now made. Certain it is, that the Lutheran Confession exhibits the same view.

The words are,—“The divine essence is ONE, which is called, and is, God, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible.” Art. I.

The Confession of Helvetia (written A. D. 1566) declares, that “God is ONE in essence or nature, subsisting by himself, all sufficient in himself, invisible, without a body, infinite, eternal, the Creator of all things visible and invisible,” &c. It adds, “We detest the multitude of Gods, because it is expressly written, The Lord thy God is one God,” &c.

The Confession of Basil (A. D. 1532) declares, that there is “ONE eternal, almighty God, in essence and substance, and *not three Gods.*”

The Confession of the Waldenses states, “that the Holy Trinity is, in essence, one only true, *alone*, eternal, almighty, and incomprehensible God, of ONE equal *indivisible* essence.”

The French Confession (A. D. 1566) says, “We believe and acknowledge ONE *only* God, who is ONE *only* and simple essence, spiritual, eternal, invisible, immutable, infinite,” &c.

The English Confession (A. D. 1562) states, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, “be of ONE power, of ONE majesty, of ONE eternity, of ONE godhead, and ONE substance. And, although these three persons be so divided that neither the Father is the Son, nor the Son is the Holy Ghost nor the Father, yet nevertheless, we believe that there is but ONE very God.”

The Confession of Belgia (A. D. 1566) declares, that “there is ONE *only* simple and spiritual essence, which we call God, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite,” &c.

The Articles of the English Episcopal Church declare, that “there is but ONE living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions,” &c.

The Confession of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, revised at the Synod of Dort (A. D. 1618—1619) declares, “We believe that there is ONE *only* and simple spiritual Being, which we call God; and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite,” &c. (See Harmony of Confessions.)

With these agrees the Westminster Confession, approved by the General Assembly of Divines in A. D. 1647, adopted by all the Presbyterian Churches in Great Britain and America, and assented to by a great part of the Congregational Churches in New England. Its words are,—“There is but ONE *only* living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible,” &c. West. Con. p. 32.

Now, is *this* the denial of the divine *unity* with which



we are implicitly charged? Can Unitarians present a more complete assertion of the *divine unity*, than is presented by these symbols of different denominations of Christians, who admit the doctrine of the Trinity?

But, admitting our statement of the divine unity to be correct, you will aver, probably, that my second proposition is subversive of the first. Whether this be so, or not, is what I now propose to investigate.

The common language of the Trinitarian symbols is, "*That there are three PERSONS in the Godhead.*" In your comments upon this, you have all along explained the word *person*, as though it were a given point, that we use this word here, in its *ordinary* acceptation, as applied to *men*. But can you satisfy yourself, that this is doing us justice? Is it not evident from Church history, that the word *person* was used, in ancient times, as a term, which would express the disagreement of Christians in general with the reputed errors of the Sabellians, and others of similar sentiments, who denied the existence of any *real distinction* in the Godhead, and asserted that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were merely *attributes* of God, or the names of different ways in which he revealed himself to mankind, or of different relations which he bore to them and in which he acted. Some of the principal Fathers and Councils meant to deny the correctness of such assertions, by using the word *person* to designate some *real*, not merely nominal, distinction in the Godhead—to signify that something more than a diversity of relation or action, in respect to us, was intended. They seem to me to have used the word *person*, because they supposed it to approximate nearer to expressing the existence of a *real distinction*, than any other which they could choose.

We profess to use the word *person*, merely from the poverty of language—merely to designate our belief of a real distinction in the Godhead; and not to describe independent, conscious beings, possessing *separate* and *equal essences* and *perfections*. Why should we be obliged so often to explain ourselves on this point? Is there any more difficulty here, or any thing more obnoxious, than when you say, "God is angry with the wicked every day?" You defend yourself in the use of such an expres-

sion, by saying, that it is only the language of *approximation*,—i. e. that it is intended to describe that, in the mind of the Deity, or in his actions, which corresponds in some measure, or in some respect, to anger in men,—not that he is really affected with the passion of anger. You will permit me then to add, that we speak of *person* in the Godhead to express that which, in some respect or other, corresponds to *persons* as applied to men,—i. e. some distinction; not that we attach to it the meaning of three beings, with a *separate* consciousness, will, omnipotence, omniscience, &c. Where then is our inconsistency in this, or the absurdity of our language, provided there is a real foundation in the Scriptures, on which we may rest the *fact* of a distinction that we believe to exist?

I could heartily wish, indeed, that the word *person* never had come into the symbols of the Churches, because it has been the occasion of so much unnecessary dispute and difficulty. But since it has long been in common use, it is difficult, perhaps inexpedient, or even impossible, altogether to reject it. If it must be retained, I readily concede that the use of it ought to be so explained and guarded, as not to lead Christians into erroneous ideas of the nature of God. Nor can I suppose that the great body of Christians have such ideas, or understand it to mean that which you attribute to us as believing. Then, surely, it is not the best mode of convincing your opponents, to take the word in a sense so different from that in which they understand it, and proceed to charge them with absurdities, consequent upon the *language* of their creed. It has always been a conceded point, that, in the statement of difficult subjects, or the discussion of them, terms might be used in a sense somewhat different from their ordinary import. And what can declare in a plainer manner that Trinitarians do use the word *person* in this way, as applied to the divine Being, than the agreement among them that *God is numerically one*, in essence and in attributes?

It might have been justly expected, likewise, that before they were charged with sentiments which subvert the divine Unity, the meaning of the word *person*, in the ancient records which describe its introduction into the technical language of the Church, should have been carefully in-

vestigated. One of your rules of exegesis, to which I have with all my heart assented, demands that "every *word* should be modified and explained, according to the *subject* which is discussed, according to the *PURPOSES*, feelings, *circumstances*, and principles of the writer." Do us the justice to apply this law of interpretation to our language, and the dispute between us about the meaning of the word *person*, is for ever at an end.

What then, you doubtless will ask, is that distinction in the Godhead, which the word *person* is meant to designate? I answer, without hesitation, that I do not know. The *fact* that a distinction exists, is what we aver; the definition of that distinction is what I shall by no means attempt. By what shall I, or can I define it? What simile drawn from created objects, which are necessarily derived and dependent, can illustrate the mode of existence in that Being who is underived, independent, unchangeable, infinite, eternal? I confess myself unable to advance a single step here in explaining what the distinction is. *I receive the FACT that it exists, simply because I believe that the Scriptures reveal the FACT.* And if the Scriptures do reveal the fact that there are three *persons* in the Godhead (in the sense explained); that there is a distinction which affords ground for the appellations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—which lays the foundation for the application of the personal pronouns, *I, thou, he*—which renders it proper to speak of *sending and being sent*, of Christ *being with God, being in his bosom*, and other things of the like nature—and yet that the divine nature belongs to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; then it is, like every other fact revealed, to be received simply on the credit of divine revelation.

Is there any more difficulty in understanding the fact that there is a distinction in the Godhead, than there is in understanding that God possesses an underived existence? With what shall we compare such existence? All other beings are *derived*; and, of course, there is no object in the universe with whose existence it can be compared. To define it, then, is beyond our reach. We can approximate towards a conception of it, merely by negatives. We deny that the divine existence has any author or cause;



and, when we have done this, we have not defined it, but simply said that a certain thing *does not* belong to it. Here we must rest. The boundaries of human knowledge can never be extended beyond this.

The distinction in the Godhead, which I have now mentioned, I ought to say here, we do not, and cannot consider as a mere subject of speculation, which has little or no concern with ardent piety, or the best hopes of the Christian. We believe that some of the most interesting and endearing exhibitions of the divine character are founded upon it, and connected with it; and that corresponding duties are urged upon us, and peculiar hopes excited, and consolations administered, by it.

In regard to this distinction, we say, *It is not a mere distinction of attributes, of relation to us, of modes of action, or of relation between attributes and substance or essence, so far as they are known to us.* We believe the Scriptures justify us in these *negations*. But *here* we leave the subject. We undertake (at least the Trinitarians of our country, with whom I am acquainted, undertake) *not* at all to describe *affirmatively* the distinction in the Godhead. When you will give me an affirmative description of *unde-rived existence*, I may safely engage to furnish you with one of *person* in the Trinity. You do not reject the belief of self-existence, merely because you cannot *affirmatively define* it; neither do we of a distinction in the Godhead, because we cannot *affirmatively define* it.

I may ask, moreover, What is the *eternity* of God? You answer by telling me, that there never was a time when he did not exist, and never can be one when he will not exist. True; but then, what was *time* before the planetary system, which measures it, had an existence? And what will *time* be when these heavens and this earth shall be blotted out? Besides, passing over this difficulty about time, you have only given a negative description of God's eternity; you *deny* certain things of him, and then aver that he is *eternal*. Yet, because you cannot affirmatively describe eternity, you will not refuse to believe that God is *eternal*. Why, then, should I reject the belief of a distinction in the Godhead, because I cannot affirmatively define it?



I do not admit, therefore, that we are exposed justly to be taxed with mysticism and absurdity, when we aver there is a distinction in the Godhead, which we are utterly unable to define. I am aware, indeed, that a writer, some time since, composed and published, in a periodical work, then edited at Cambridge, a piece, in which he laboured, with no small degree of acuteness, to show that no man can believe a proposition, the terms of which are unintelligible, or which he does not understand. His object in doing this appears to have been, to fix upon a belief in the doctrine of the Trinity the charge of absurdity. But, it seems to me, the whole argument of that piece is founded on a confusion of two things, which are in themselves very diverse,—viz. *terms* which are *unintelligible*, and *things* which are *undefinable*. You believe in the *fact*, that the divine existence is without cause; you understand the *fact*, that God exists uncaused; but you cannot define *un-derived existence*. I believe, on the authority of the Scriptures, that there is a real distinction in the Godhead; but I cannot define it. Still the proposition that there is a *real distinction*, is just as intelligible as the one that God is self-existent. A multitude of propositions, respecting diverse subjects, resemble these. We affirm, that gravitation brings a body thrown into the air down to the earth.\* The *fact* is perfectly intelligible. The terms are perfectly understood, so far as they are the means of describing this fact. But, then, what is gravitation? An affirmative definition cannot be given, which is not a mere exchange of synonymes. Nor can any comparison define it; for to what shall we liken it?

The mind of every man who is accustomed to think, will supply him with a multitude of propositions of this nature; in all of which, the *fact* designed to be described is clear. The terms, so far as they describe this fact, are clear; but the *subject* of the proposition,—that is, the thing itself, or agent, concerning which the fact is asserted,—is undefinable; and, *excepting in regard to the fact in question*, perhaps wholly unknown to us.

\* Illustrations might in like manner be drawn from electricity, galvanism, magnetism, &c., the existence of which cannot be denied, but the nature of which cannot, in affirmative terms, be defined.—ED.

How easy now to perplex common minds, by calling a *proposition unintelligible*, the *subject* of which is *undefinable*! In confounding things so very different, consists, as I apprehend, the whole ingenuity of the piece in question,—an ingenuity which may excite the admiration of those who love the subtilties of dispute, but cannot contribute much to illuminate the path of theological science.

I have been thus particular in my statement of this very difficult part of the subject, in order to prevent misapprehension. I certainly do not hold myself bound to vindicate any of the *definitions* of *person* or of *distinction* in the Godhead which I have seen, because I do not adopt them. I do not and cannot understand them; and to a definition I cannot with propriety assent (still less can I undertake to defend it), until I do understand what it signifies. It is truly matter of regret, that some great and good men have carried their speculations on this subject to such a length, that they have bewildered themselves and their readers. I would always speak with respect and tenderness of such men: Still I have no hesitation in saying, that my mind is absolutely unable to elicit any distinct and certain ideas from any of the definitions of *person* in the Godhead which I have ever examined. A few examples of attempts at definition or illustration will vindicate the correctness of what I have just said.

Let me begin with Tertullian, who flourished about A. D. 200.

In his book against Praxeas, he says, “This perversity (*viz.* of Praxeas) thinks itself to be in possession of pure truth, while it supposes that we are to believe in one God, not otherwise than if we make the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the self same; as if all were not *one*, while all are of one, *viz. by a unity of substance*; and still the mysterious economy which distributes unity into a *Trinity* is observed, marking out [distinguishing] Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There are three, not in condition, but rank; not in essence, but form; not in power, but in kind; but of *one substance, one condition, and one power*,—for there is *one* God, from whom all those ranks, and forms, and kinds, by the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are reckoned.”

A little farther on, he says, “Whatever therefore the substance of the Word (*Logos*) is, I call him a *PERSON*, and pay him reverence; and, acknowledging the Son, I maintain that he is *second* from the Father.

“The *third* is the Spirit from God and the Son, as the fruit from the stalk is the third from the root; a stream from the river [the *third*] from the fountain; the sharp point from a ray [the *third*] from the sun. So

the Trinity proceeds, by interlinked and connected grades, from the Father," (c. 2.)

In cap. 9, he says, "They (the Trinity) are not separate from each other, although the Father is said to be diverse from the Son and the Spirit."

And again, "We are baptized into the Persons (of the Trinity) severally, by the use of their several names."

It is proper to observe here, how plainly and definitely the words *person* and *Trinity* are, at this very early age, applied by Tertullian to the Godhead; which contradicts the confident affirmations of some writers, that these terms were an invention of later ages and of scholastic divinity. I may add, that the familiar and habitual use which Tertullian makes of these terms, proves that they were *commonly understood*, or at least used in the Church, at a period so early, and in reference to the very distinction in the Godhead which is the subject of the present discussion.

The object which Tertullian aims at, in predicating *person* of the Godhead, is, as has been already remarked, to oppose the sentiment of Praxeas, who denied that there existed any distinction in the divine nature. But, to explain Tertullian's similitudes, designed to illustrate the nature of this distinction, and so frequently copied in after ages, is more than I shall undertake. Who does not see that all similitudes drawn from created, limited, dependent beings or things, must be utterly inadequate to illustrate the mode in which an uncreated, infinite, and omnipresent Being exists? What is the attempt at explanation, but "darkening words without knowledge?" I believe, with Tertullian, in a threefold distinction of the Godhead; but I believe simply *the fact of the Trinity*, and do not venture to make any attempt at explanation.

The venerable Council of Nice, held A. D. 325, have made an attempt, similar to that of the Father just named, at definition or description. Their words are—"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."



This Council, like the great body of the ancient Fathers, believed in the doctrine of the *eternal generation* of the Son. This generation, from all eternity, appears to have been the distinctive point of difference between the Son and the Father (whom the ancient ecclesiastical writers often describe as ἀγεννητος, *unbegotten*), on which they fixed their attention, and which they have plainly laboured in their creed to describe or illustrate. As *co-eternal* with the Father, they regarded the Son,—of the *same substance*, they have asserted him to be. How then could he be begotten, or derived, if he were of the same substance and of the same eternity? To hold fast both these ideas, they said the Son was “God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father.” They endeavoured to justify such expressions, by saying, that the light of the sun is coeval with it, and of the same substance; and by a multitude of similes of such a nature, drawn from created and material objects. How utterly incompetent all this must be to effect the object intended, is easy of apprehension, when we once reflect that the divine nature is self-existent, independent, and immutable.

The true occasion, however, why the Nicene Fathers accumulated so many terms in their creed, must be found in their intention to oppose every form and species of Arianism, although they meant to strike, as has been before observed, at other opinions which they disapproved. A slight consideration of the Nicene Creed might lead one, perhaps, to suppose, that undefinable or objectionable terms of illustration had been, almost intentionally, accumulated in it. The history of the introduction of these terms, however, may be found in the manner in which the Arians disputed with the Nicene Fathers. “Being asked, whether they acknowledged the Son as begotten of the Father, they assented,—meaning that they acknowledged the derived existence of the Son from God, as well as that of all other beings. Did they acknowledge the Son as God?—Altogether so. Did they acknowledge him as the *true* God?—Undoubtedly: He must be the true God, who is constituted God. Was the Son of God a creature? By no means (meaning, not a creature in the sense that



other things were; these being *mediately* created by the Logos, but the Logos *immediately* by the Father). But when the word *ὁμοούσιος* (*homousios*, i.e. the same in substance) was proposed, and it was decided that Christ was *consubstantial* with the Father, they never assented to this, as it excluded all hope of evasion."—(Athan. Epis. ad Afric.) A sober inquirer may therefore find, perhaps, more reason to vindicate this term (so much agitated in the churches), as used by the Nicene Fathers, than he might at first suspect.

After all, I am unable to conceive of any definite meaning, in the phrase, *eternal generation*. *Generation* or *production*, like *creation*, necessarily implies in itself *beginning*; and, of course, contradicts the idea of absolute eternity. In so far as Christ is divine, *consubstantial* with the Father, he must, for ought that I can see, be necessarily regarded as self-existent, independent, and eternal. A being to whom these attributes do not belong, can never be regarded as God, except he be called so by a figurative use of the term. The *generation* or *production* of the Son of God, *as divine*, *as really and truly God*, seems to be out of question, therefore, unless it be an express doctrine of revelation; which is so far from being the case, that I conceive the contrary is plainly taught. If the phrase, *eternal generation*, then, is to be vindicated, it is only on the ground that it is figuratively used, to describe an indefinable connexion and discrimination between Father and Son, which is from everlasting. It is not well chosen, however, for this purpose, because it necessarily, even in its figurative use, carries along with it an idea which is at variance with the self-existence and independence of Christ, as divine; and, of course, in so far as it does this, it seems to detract from his real divinity.

I cannot, therefore, understand what "God of God, light of light, very God of very God," means; nor can I think that any definite and positive ideas ever were or could be attached to these phrases. That the Nicene Fathers meant to contradict Arius, is sufficiently plain to any one conversant with the history of the Council of Nice. But, that they have made out a positive, or affirmative and intelligible definition of the distinction between Fa-

ther and Son, I presume no one, at the present day, will hardly venture to assert.

The Council of Constantinople (A. D. 381), in their Synodic Epistle to the Western Bishops, have shown the manner in which the doctrine of the Trinity was stated and defended in their day. They adopted and enlarged the Nicene Symbol, so as to strike at the opinions of Macedonius; and then, in their Synodic Letter, gave the sum of what they had done, or what they believed. My objection to their language is, that it is too affirmative. "Three most perfect hypostases, or three perfect persons," though aimed to contradict Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, and others of like sentiments, is an attempt to define too far. *Hypostases*, or *persons*, in the sense of *distinction* in the Godhead, may be admissible through the penury of language. But most *perfect hypostases*, *perfect persons*, is attempting to make the *distinction* more a matter of definition than it can be made. I believe that what they designed to assert is substantially true; but I cannot adopt, because I cannot regard as intelligible, all their language.

Let us leave antiquity now, and glance for a moment at some of the similar attempts at definition or illustration in modern times. The celebrated Leibnitz was requested by Loeffler, who had undertaken to refute the writings of a certain English Antitrinitarian, to give him an affirmative definition of the persons in the Godhead. He sent for answer the following:—"Several persons in an absolute substance numerically the same, signify several, particular, intelligent substances essentially related." On farther consideration, he abandoned this, and sent a second, which was,—"*Several persons, in an absolute substance numerically the same, mean relative, incommunicable modes of subsisting.*"

If Leibnitz actually understood this, I believe he must have been a better master of metaphysics than any person who has ever read his definition. In fact, he does not himself appear to have been satisfied with it; for, not long after, he wrote as follows:—"We must say, that there are *relations* in the divine substance, which distinguish the *persons*, since these persons cannot be absolute sub-

stances. But we must aver, too, that these relations are substantial. At least, we must say that the Divine Persons are not the same Concrete, under different denominations or relations; as a man may be, at the same time, both a poet and an orator. We must say, moreover, that the three Persons are not as absolute substances as the whole." \*

This is somewhat better than either of his former attempts, inasmuch as it is confined principally to description of a negative kind. Yet, after all, I obtain by it no additional light upon the subject which is important.

With quite as little success did that original genius and masterly reasoner, the celebrated Toellner of Frankfort, labour to define the subject in question.

"It is certain," says he, "that we must conceive, as co-existing in God, three eternal and really different actions,—the action of activity, of idea, and of the desire of all possible good within and without him.

"Three really different actions, co-existing from eternity, necessarily presuppose three really different and operative substrata. It is thus, through the aid of reason illuminated by the Scriptures, we come to know, that the power, the understanding, and the will of God, are not merely three faculties, but three distinct energies, that is, three substances."—(Vermisch. Aufsätze. B. I. p. 81.)

Tertullian's explication, or the Nicene Creed, is, at least, as intelligible to me as this.

I have not produced these instances, in order to satisfy you that all attempts of this nature are and must be fruitless. You, doubtless, need no such proof. I have produced them for two reasons:—*the first*, to justify myself, in some measure, for not attempting a definition, in which no one has yet succeeded:—*the second*, to show that, notwithstanding all the fruitless attempts at definition which have been made, and notwithstanding the variety of method in which men have chosen to make these attempts, yet, *for substance*, there is a far greater unanimity of opinion among Trinitarians than you and your friends *seem* to be willing to concede. I grant freely, that there is a great variety in the mode by which an attempt at definition or illustration is made. With my present views, I can never look upon any attempts of this nature but with regret.

\* Remarques sur le livre d'un Antitrinitaire Anglois, p. 26.



But I am very far from accusing them generally of any ill design,—much less can I treat them with contempt.

Patient investigation and candour will lead one to believe, as it seems to me, that the *thing aimed at was, in substance, to assert the idea of a distinction in the Godhead.* To do this with more success, as they imagined, they endeavoured to describe, *affirmatively*, the nature of that distinction. Here they have all failed. But does this prove, that there is actually a great variety of opinion among Trinitarians, in regard to the principal thing concerned, merely because endeavours to define this thing have produced a great variety of illustration? I cannot help feeling that this matter is sometimes misrepresented, and very generally but little understood.

And now, can you, by arguing *a priori*, prove to me that the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with itself, or “subversive of the doctrine of the divine unity, and therefore untrue?” We say, the divine essence and attributes are *numerically one*, so far as they are known to us, but there is in the Godhead a *real distinction* between the Father and the Son. (I omit the consideration of the Holy Spirit here, because your sermon merely hints at this subject, and because all difficulties, in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, are essentially connected with proving or disproving the divinity of Christ.) *We abjure all attempts to define that distinction—we admit it simply as a fact, on the authority of divine revelation.* Now, how can you prove that a distinction does *not* exist in the Godhead? I acknowledge that the want of evidence in the Scriptures to establish the fact, would be a sufficient reason for rejecting it. But we are now making out a statement of the subject, and answering objections that are urged *a priori*, or independently of the Scriptures. The proof which the New Testament exhibits, we are hereafter to examine. How, then, I repeat it, are you to show that we believe in a self-contradiction, or in an impossibility? If the distinction in question cannot be *proved*, independently of the Scriptures (and most freely I acknowledge it cannot), it is equally certain that it cannot in this manner be *disproved*. In order to prove that this distinction contradicts the divine unity, must you not be able to tell



what it is, and what the divine unity is? Can you do either?

Allow me for a moment to dwell on the subject now casually introduced. It is a clear point, I think, that the unity of God cannot be proved without revelation. It may perhaps be rendered faintly probable. Then you depend on Scripture proof for the establishment of this doctrine. But have the Scriptures anywhere told us what the *divine unity* is? Will you produce the passage? The *oneness* of God they assert: But this they assert always, *in opposition to the idols of the Heathen,—the polytheism of the Gentiles,—the gods, superior and inferior, which they worshipped.* In no other sense have the Scriptures defined the ONENESS of the Deity. What, then, is *oneness*, in the uncreated, infinite, and eternal Being? In created and finite objects, we have a distinct perception of what we mean by it; but can *created* objects be just and adequate representatives of the *uncreated ONE*? Familiar as the assertion is, in your conversation and in your sermons, that God is ONE, can you give me any definition of this *oneness*, except a negative one? That is, you deny plurality of it: You say God is but one, and not two or more. Still, in what, I ask, does the divine unity consist? Has not God different and various faculties and powers? Is he not almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, and good? Does he not act differently *i. e.* variously, in the natural and in the moral world? Does his unity consist, then, appropriately in his essence? But what is the essence of God? And how can you assert that his unity consists appropriately in this, unless you know what his essence is, and whether oneness can be any better predicated of this than of his attributes?

Your answer to all this is,—“The nature of God is beyond my reach: I cannot define it. I approach to a definition of the divine unity only by negatives.” That is, you deny the numerical plurality of God; or you say, there are not two or more essences, omnisciences, omnipotences, &c. : But here all investigation is at an end. Is it possible to show what constitutes the *internal nature* of the divine essence or attributes, or how they are related to each other, or what internal distinctions exist? About all

this, revelation says not one word,—certainly the book of Nature gives no instruction concerning it. The assertion, then, that God is *one*, can never be fairly understood as meaning any thing more than that he is *numerically one*,—*i. e.* it simply denies polytheism, and never can reach beyond this. But how does this prove, or how can it prove, that there may not be, or that there are not, distinctions in the Godhead, either in regard to attributes or essence, the nature of which is unknown to us, and the existence of which is to be proved by the authority of the Scriptures only?

When Unitarians, therefore, inquire what that distinction in the Godhead is in which we believe, we answer, that we do not profess to understand *what* it is: We do not undertake to define it *affirmatively*. We can approximate to a definition of it only by negatives. We deny that the Father is in *all* respects the same as the Son; and that the Holy Spirit is in *all* respects the same as either the Father or the Son. We rest the *fact*, that a distinction exists, solely upon the basis of revelation.

In principle, then, what more difficulty lies in the way of believing in a threefold distinction of the Godhead, than in believing in the divine unity?

I am certainly willing to allow, that the evidences of the divine unity in the New Testament are sufficient: But I may be permitted to suggest here, that, in my view, *the passages asserting it are fewer in number, than the passages which assert or imply that Christ is truly divine*. I cannot but think that the frequent assertions of your sermon, and of Unitarians in general, with regard to this subject, are very erroneous; that they are made at hazard, and without a diligent and faithful comparison of the number of texts that respect the divine unity in the New Testament, and the number of those which concern the divinity of the Saviour. After all, to what purpose is it, that so great a multitude of texts should be required to prove the divinity of Christ, by those who believe, as you do, that the decisions of the Scriptures are of divine authority? The decision of one text fairly made out by the laws of exegesis, is as authoritative as that of a thousand. Would a law, a thousand times repeated, have any more

*authority* attached to it for the repetition? It might be better explained by the repetition in different connexions; but its *authority* is uniformly the same.

But, to return from this digression, suppose I should affirm that two subjects, A and B, are *numerically* identical in regard to something called X, but diverse or distinct in regard to something else called Y, is there any absurdity or contradiction in this affirmation? I hope I shall not, by making this supposition, be subjected to the imputation of endeavouring to prove the doctrine of the Trinity by the science of Algebra: for, my only object in proposing this statement, is to illustrate the answer that we make to a very common question which Unitarians put us,—“How can three be one, and one three?”—In no way, I necessarily and cheerfully reply. “How, then, is the doctrine of the Trinity in unity to be vindicated?”—In a manner which is not at all embarrassed by these questions. *We do not maintain that the Godhead is three in the same respects that it is one, but the reverse.* In regard to X, we maintain its numerical unity: In regard to Y, we maintain a threefold distinction. I repeat it: *We maintain simply the fact, that there is such a distinction, on Scripture authority.* We do not profess to understand in what it consists.

Will you not concede now, provided the statements made above are correct, that we are not very unreasonable, when we complain that, from the time in which Tertullian maintained the doctrine of the Trinity against Praxeas, down to the present period, the views and statements of Trinitarians, in regard to this subject, should have been so frequently misunderstood or misrepresented?

I have dwelt sufficiently on my statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the difficulties that lie in the way of proving this statement to be erroneous or contradictory. Before I proceed to the next topic, I will merely mention, in a brief way, two of the most-formidable objections to our views which I have seen, and which were adduced by two men, who must be reckoned among the most intelligent that have embraced the cause of Unitarianism. The first is from Faustus Socinus, and runs thus:—



"No one is so stupid as not to see that these things are contradictory, that our God, the creator of heaven and earth, should be *one only*, in number, and yet be three, each of which is our God. For, as to what they affirm, that our God is one in number, in respect to his essence, but three-fold in regard to persons; here again they affirm things which are self-contradictory, since two or three persons cannot exist where there is numerically only one individual essence; for, to constitute more than one person, more than one individual essence is required. For, what is person, but a certain individual intelligent essence? Or, in what way, I pray, does one person differ from another, unless by the diversity of his individual or numerical essence? This implies, that the divine essence is numerically *one* only, yet that there is more than one person; although the divine essence which is numerically one, and divine person are altogether identical." (Opp. tom. i. p. 697.)

Here, however, it is obvious, that the whole weight of the objection lies in an erroneous use of the words *person* and *essence*. Socinus attaches to them a sense which Trinitarians do not admit. How, then, can Trinitarians be charged with inconsistencies, in propositions which they do not make?

Of the same tenor with the objection of Socinus, is the objection mentioned by the famous Toellner, (Theolog. Untersuchungen, B. I. p. 29), which, to save room, I shall merely translate, without subjoining the original.

"The most considerable objection (against the doctrine of the Trinity) is this," says he, "that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each a particular substance, endowed with understanding; and, at the same time, neither of them is said to have his separate being, his separate understanding, his separate will, his separate power of action; but all three together have only one being, one understanding, one will, one power of action. As it appears then, it is affirmed that there are three real beings, truly separate; each, consequently, having his own individual power of action, and not having it; three *separate* persons, and three persons *not separate*."

All the difficulty which this masterly writer has, in his usual way, so strikingly portrayed, lies merely in the representations of those Trinitarians, who have expressed themselves on this subject so incautiously, as to be understood to affirm that there are three separate beings (persons, in the *common* sense of the word), in the Godhead, with distinct powers, volitions, &c. If there be any now, who defend such a statement of this subject, I must leave them to compose the difficulty with Toellner as they can. The view of the doctrine of the Trinity given by Toellner,



in his statement of the objection, is not that which I have presented, or which I should ever undertake to defend. Of course, it cannot be adduced as an objection against the statement which I have given, and have undertaken to defend.

The second objection appears, at first sight, more formidable and perplexing. It comes from Taylor, and was inserted in the *English Theological Magazine*, Vol. I. No. 4, p. 111. 1770. I have not opportunity of access to the original, and take the ideas from a Latin translation of the piece, which was published in Germany.

"There can," says Taylor, "be no real distinction between the Father and the Son, unless they so differ from each other, that what is peculiar to the Father, is wanting in the Son; and what is peculiar to the Son, is wanting in the Father. Now, that property which belongs exclusively to the Father, or the Son, must be numbered among the perfections of God; for, in the divine nature no imperfections can exist. It follows, then, that some perfection is lacking both in the Father and in the Son, so that neither is endowed with infinite perfection, which is essential to the divine nature. It must be conceded then, that the essence of the Father and the Son is not one and the same."

Ingenious and specious as this is, still I am unable to see that it settles the point in debate. The essence and attributes of God, so far as they are known to us, are *numerically one*, as we have already admitted. If, by "*perfection*," Taylor means *all* which belongs to the Godhead, then I answer merely by saying, It is essential to the perfection of the Godhead, that the distinction between the Father and Son should exist; for that otherwise there would be imperfection. My right to make such a statement is just the same as his to make the assertion, that the distinction between Father and Son involved an imperfection in each. The very distinction between Father and Son is essential to complete divinity; and, did not these exist, something would be wanting to complete the perfection of the Godhead. I acknowledge this is assumption; but so is Taylor's statement; and an argument which is built on an assumption, may surely be opposed by another argument which has the same foundation.

My object, in the present Letter, has been, thus far, to compare our views of the Trinity with those which you have ascribed to us; to show, that we are not exposed, on

account of our belief, to be justly charged with gross and palpable absurdity, or with "subverting the Unity of the Godhead;" and to prove that the question, after all, whether there is a distinction in the Godhead, must be referred solely to the decision of the Scriptures.

To them I shall appeal, as soon as I have made a few remarks on the twofold nature which we ascribe to Christ. You say, (p. 11.)—

"We (Unitarians), believe in the *unity of Jesus Christ*. We believe that *Jesus* is one mind, one soul, one being, as truly one as we are, and equally distinct from the one God. We complain of the doctrine of the Trinity, that, not satisfied with making God three beings, it makes *Jesus Christ* two beings, and thus introduces infinite confusion into our conceptions of his character. This corruption of Christianity, alike repugnant to common sense, and to the general strain of Scripture, is a remarkable proof of the power of a false philosophy in disfiguring the simple truth of *Jesus*."

You will admit that this is expressed in terms of severity. Whether we are really deserving of it, who hold the doctrine in question, every lover of truth will permit to be brought to the test of fair examination.

I am not certain that I have rightly apprehended your meaning, when you say that the twofold nature of Christ is "repugnant to *common sense*." Do you mean, that common sense may determine first, independently of revelation, that the doctrine cannot be true; and then maintain the impossibility that revelation should exhibit it? If so, then we are able to decide, *a priori*, what can be revealed, and what cannot; consequently, what we may believe, and what we must disbelieve. It follows, then, that a revelation is unnecessary, or, rather, that it is impossible,—at least one which shall be obligatory upon our belief: for we have only to say, that our common sense decides against the propriety or the possibility of the things said to be revealed, and then we are at liberty to reject them.

But is this the proper sphere in which *common sense* should act? Is it not true, that common sense is limited to judging of the evidences that the Bible is of divine origin and authority; to establishing the rules of exegesis common to all languages and books; and, finally, to directing a fair and impartial application of those rules, to

determine what the original writer of any portion of the Scriptures designed to inculcate? Having once admitted, as you have, the divine authority of the Scripture in deciding all questions, and your obligation to submit to its decision, when you can understand the meaning of it by using the common rules of interpretation, how is it to be determined by *common sense* whether Christ has two natures or one? Common sense may investigate the language of the inspired writers, and inquire what they have said; and if, by the sound rules of interpretation, it should appear that they have ascribed two natures to Christ, or asserted that which unavoidably leads to the conclusion that he has two natures, then, either it is to be believed, or the authority of the writers is to be cast off. In rejecting any doctrine which the language of Scripture plainly teaches, *common sense* must cast off the divine authority of the Bible. To receive the Bible as a revelation from God, and yet to decide, *a priori*, what the Scriptures can and what they cannot contain, and to make their language bend until it conform with this decision, cannot surely be a proper part for a sincere lover of truth and sober investigation.

In saying, then, that the doctrine which teaches that Christ has two natures, is "repugnant to common sense," I presume you must mean, that the rules of exegesis, applied by common sense, lead unavoidably to the conclusion that Christ has but one nature. If this be your meaning, what I have to say in reply will be contained in my next Letter.

In regard to the impossibility that Christ should possess two natures, and the absurdity of such a supposition, I have not much to say. If the Scriptures are the Word of God, and do contain the doctrine in question, it is neither impossible nor absurd. Most certainly, if it be a fact that Christ possesses two natures, it is a fact with which natural religion has no concern; at least, of which it has no knowledge. It can, therefore, decide neither for nor against it. It is purely a doctrine of revelation; and to Scripture only can we look for evidences of it. If the doctrine be palpably absurd and contradictory to reason, and yet it is found in the Bible, then reject the claims of



the Bible to inspiration and truth. But if the laws of interpretation do not permit us to avoid the conclusion that it is found there, we cannot with any consistency admit that the Scriptures are of divine authority, and yet reject the doctrine.

How shall any man decide, *a priori*, that the doctrine cannot be true? Can we limit the omniscient and omnipotent God, by saying that the Son cannot be so united with human nature, so "become flesh and dwell among us," that we recognise and distinguish, in this complex Being, but one person, and therefore speak of but one? If you ask me how such a union can be effected between natures so infinitely diverse as the divine and human, I answer (as in the case of the distinction in the Godhead), I do not know *how* this is done; *I do not undertake to define wherein that union consists, nor how it is effected.* God cannot divest himself of his essential perfections,—*i. e.* he is immutably perfect; nor could the human nature of Christ have continued to be human nature, if it had ceased to be subject to the infirmities, and sorrows, and affections of this nature, while he dwelt among men. In whatever way, then, the union of the two natures was effected, it neither destroyed nor essentially changed either the divine or human nature.

Hence, at one time, Christ is represented as the Creator of the Universe; and at another, as a man of sorrows, and of imperfect knowledge,—(John, i. 1—18; Hebrews, i. 10—12; Luke, xxii. 44, 45; ii. 52.) If both these accounts are true, he must, as it seems to me, be God omniscient and omnipotent; and still a feeble man, and of imperfect knowledge. It is, indeed, impossible to reconcile these two things, without the supposition of two natures. The simple question, then, is, Can they be joined or united, so that, in speaking of them, we may say the person is God or man; or, we may call him by one single name, and by this understand, as designated, either or both of these natures? On this subject, the religion of nature says nothing. Reason has nothing to say; for, surely, no finite being is competent to decide that the junction of the two natures is impossible or absurd.

*One person*, in the sense in which each of us is one,



Christ could not be. If you make God the soul, and Jesus of Nazareth the body of Christ, then you take away his human nature, and deny the imperfection of his knowledge. But, may not God have been, in a manner altogether peculiar and mysterious, united to Jesus, without displaying at once his whole power in him, or necessarily rendering him supremely perfect? In the act of creation, God does not put forth all his power—nor in preservation—nor in sanctification; nor does he bring all his knowledge into action when he inspires prophets and apostles. Was it necessary that he should exert it all, when in conjunction with the human nature of Christ? In governing the world from day to day, God does not surely exhaust his omnipotence or his wisdom. He employs only so much as is necessary to accomplish the design which he has in view. In his union with Jesus of Nazareth, the divine *Logos* could not, of course, be necessitated at once to put forth all his energy, or exhibit all his knowledge and wisdom. Just so much of it, and no more, was manifested, as was requisite to constitute the character of an all-sufficient incarnate Mediator and Redeemer. When necessary, power and authority infinitely above human were displayed; when otherwise, the human nature sympathised and suffered like that of other men.

Is this impossible for God? Is there any thing in such a doctrine which, if found in the Bible, would afford an adequate reason for rejecting its claims to inspiration? For my own part, I cannot see the impossibility or the absurdity of such a thing. How shall we limit the Deity, as to the ways in which he is to reveal himself to his creatures?

Can we not find mystery within ourselves which is as inexplicable as any thing in the doctrine before us? We do not appropriate the affections of our minds to our bodies, nor those of our bodies to our minds: Each class of affections is separate and distinct. Yet we refer either to the *whole* man. Abraham was mortal; Abraham was immortal; are both equally true? He had an immortal and a mortal part; yet both made but *one person*. How is it a greater mystery if I say Christ was God, and Christ was man? He had a nature human and divine. One

person, indeed, in the sense in which Abraham was, he is not. Nor is there any created object to which the union of Godhead with humanity can be compared. But, shall we deny the possibility of it on this account? Or, shall we tax with absurdity that which it is utterly beyond our reach to scan? I shrink from such an undertaking, and place myself in the attitude of listening to what the voice of revelation may dictate in regard to this. It *becomes* us here to do so—to prostrate ourselves before the Father of Lights, and say, “Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear. Lord, what wilt thou have us to believe?”

You may, indeed, find fault with us that we speak of *three persons* in the Godhead where there is but *one nature*; and yet of but *one person* in Christ where there are *two natures*. I admit that it is an apparent inconsistency in the use of language, and cannot but wish that it had not originally been adopted. Still, it is capable of some explanation. In the first case, *person* simply designates the idea that there is some *real* distinction in the Godhead, in opposition to the opinion that it is merely *nominal*. In the second, it designates Christ, as he appears to us in the New Testament, clothed with a human body, and yet acting (as we suppose), not only as possessing the attributes of a man, but as also possessing divine power. We see the attributes of human nature in such intimate conjunction with those of the divine, that we cannot separate the agents; at least we know not where to draw the line of separation, because we do not know the manner in which the union is effected or continued. We speak, therefore, of one *person*,—*i. e.* one agent. And when we say that the two natures of Christ are united in one person, we mean to say, that divinity and humanity are brought into such a connexion in this case, that we cannot separate them, so as to make two entirely distinct and separate agents.

The present generation of Trinitarians, however, do not feel responsible for the introduction of such technical terms, in senses so diverse from the common ideas attached to them. They merely take them as they find them. For my own part, I have no attachment to them; I think them injudiciously chosen, and heartily wish they were,

by general consent, entirely exploded. They serve, perhaps, in most cases, principally to keep up the form of words without definite ideas ; and I fear they have been the occasion of many disputes in the Church. The *things* which are aimed at by these terms, I would strenuously retain, because I believe in the divine origin and authority of the Bible, and that its language, fairly interpreted, does inculcate these things. And candour on your part will certainly admit, that *things only* are worth any dispute. Logomachy is too trifling for a lover of truth.

## LETTER III.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

My great object, hitherto, has been to show, that the real question at issue between us, in regard to a distinction in the Godhead and the divinity of the Saviour, cannot be decided independently of the Scriptures. There is no such absurdity or inconsistency in either of these doctrines, as will justify us in rejecting them without investigation. The question, whether they are true or not, belongs *entirely* and *purely* to revelation. If you admit this, then the simple question between us is, What does revelation teach? We are agreed that the Bible is the Word of God; that whatever "Christ taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired Apostles, is of divine authority." We are agreed as to *principles* of interpretation, in most things that are of importance. We both concede, that the principles by which all books are to be interpreted, are those which apply to the interpretation of the Bible; for the very plain reason which you have given, that when God condescends to speak and write for men, it is according to the established rules of human language. What better than an enigma would the Scriptures be, if such were not the fact? An *inspired interpreter* would be as necessary to explain, as an inspired prophet or apostle was to compose, the books of Scripture.

From this great and fundamental principle of the Scriptural writings,—viz. that they are composed agreeably to the common laws of human language, it results, that the grammatical analysis of the words of any passage,—*i. e.* an investigation of their usual and general meaning, of their syntactical connexion, of their idiom, and of their relation to the context, must be the essential process, in determining the sense of any text or part of Scripture.



On this fundamental process, depends the interpretation of all the classics, and of all other books. In conformity to this process, rules of interpretation are prescribed, which cannot be violated without at once plunging into the dark and boundless field of conjectural exegesis. I may obtain aid from many sources, to throw light upon the meaning of words and sentences. From a knowledge of the geography of any country—of its climate, soil, productions, mountains, rivers, and other natural objects, as well as of the manners, customs, laws, history, &c., of its inhabitants—I may obtain assistance to explain its language, and must obtain it, if I mean to make out a satisfactory interpretation. But I can never dispense with the laws of grammatical analysis. These laws are vindicated by the simple fact, that every writer wishes and expects to be understood by his cotemporaries, and therefore may be expected to use language as they do. We presume this of the sacred writers; and therefore apply to their productions, as to those of classic authors, the common rules of grammatical interpretation.

Admitting these rules to be the best and surest guide to the meaning of language, we cannot supersede them by *supposing*, or *conjecturing*, peculiarities in a writer. It is only when these peculiarities are proved, or at least rendered probable, that they can be admitted to influence our interpretation of any passage. Without such proof, we cannot violate the obvious principles of grammatical interpretation, for the sake of vindicating from inconsistency, absurdity, or contradiction, any author, even a Scriptural one.

I must here explain myself, however, in order to prevent mistake in regard to my meaning. The Scriptures certainly stand on different ground from that on which any other book rests, on account of their claim to be received as a revelation from God. What other book can plead well-authenticated miracles for its support; or can produce declarations of a prophetic nature that have been fulfilled; or can glory in such an exhibition of the principles of piety and virtue—of love to God, and of benevolence and beneficence to men? Just in proportion, then, as these evidences influence my mind to believe that the

Bible is of divine origin, in the same proportion it becomes improbable to me that this Bible contains absurdities, errors, or contradictions. When any *apparent* error or contradiction attracts my attention, I hesitate to pronounce it such as it appears to be. My reason for doing so is the strength of the evidence in favour of its divine origin; which is such, that I must do violence to my convictions, if I admit that the book contains either what is erroneous or contradictory. I am, then, slow to attribute, in any case, such a sense to words in the Scriptures, as would make a passage speak either absurdity or contradiction. But if, after all the light which I could gain, it should appear still to be a *plain case*, that there is either absurdity or contradiction in the sacred text; then I must find a different reading—or give up the passage—or renounce the whole book. I may suspend an opinion, while I live, as to *doubtful* cases. My convictions respecting the nature and design of the Holy Scriptures, the imperfection of my knowledge, diffidence in myself, all *demand* that I should act in this manner. But, in any *clear case*, where the meaning of a sacred writer, or what he originally designed to say, can be *definitely* ascertained by the common laws of interpretation,—and it appears plainly that this meaning is erroneous, or contradicts some other passage,—I have no right to put a constructive sense upon the words, and do violence to the passage, in order to avoid the consequences that may follow. I cannot honestly do it. The same common sense and reason which prescribe the laws of exegesis, decide that the meaning of a writer must be that which those laws determine it to be. Of course, if I put a gloss upon any passage, which represents it as conveying a meaning different from that which the laws of interpretation would assign to it, I may deceive others, or I may serve the interests of party; but I violate the reason which God has given me by so doing, and act a part dishonest, and unworthy of an inquirer after truth.

If the fundamental maxims of exegesis lead to the belief that a writer of the New Testament has contradicted himself, or another sacred writer, then I must revert at once to the question, Is the book divine? Can it be so, if there is contradiction? This question I may settle (on my re-

sponsibility to God) as I please. But I have no right to violate the fundamental rules of language, by forcing a meaning upon the writer to make him consistent ; which it is obvious, on the universal principles of explaining language, he never designed to convey. In determining the question, whether the writers of the New Testament were inspired, I must always, in attending to the internal evidence of the books, consider whether they have contradicted each other. To determine this question, I cannot violate the simple rules of grammatical exegesis. I must read this book as I do all other books. Then, if there evidently be contradiction, I must reject its claims ; if there be not,—and, I think, the evidence is sufficient that they are well-founded,—I must admit them. But, at any period subsequent to this, when I have admitted the book to be inspired, I am not at liberty to aver that the writers could never have taught some particular doctrine which I may dislike ; and therefore to do violence to the rules of grammatical interpretation, in order to explain away a doctrine of this nature, which they seem to inculcate. My simple inquiry must be, what sentiment does the language of this or that passage convey, without violence or perversion of rule ? When this question is settled *philologically* (not *philosophically*), then I either believe what is taught, or else reject the claim of divine authority. What can my own theories and reasonings, about the absurdity or reasonableness of any particular doctrine, avail in determining whether a writer of the New Testament *has taught* this doctrine or not ? My investigation must be conducted independently of my *philosophy*, by my *philology*. And, when I have obtained his meaning by the simple and universal rules of expounding language, I choose the course I will take ; I must believe his assertion, or reject his authority.

If these be not sound maxims of interpretation, I confess myself a stranger to the subject ; nor can I help thinking that you will accord with me at once in the views just expressed.

Guided, then, by these principles, let us now come to the investigation of a few passages in the New Testament, which concern the divine nature of Christ. I take this



point, because you have dwelt most upon it ; and because, very obviously, when this is admitted or rejected, no possible objection can be felt to admitting or rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity.

You will not require of me, however, to examine at length every text of the New Testament, which I may suppose to have any connexion with the subject in question. I must be permitted, in order to save time, to select only those texts, the language of which appears to be genuine, and above the condemnation of textual criticism ; and such as appear to contain the best and most decisive proof of the point to be discussed. Believing the New Testament to be of divine origin and authority, you will permit me to add, that I cannot think the decision of this or any other question, depends on the number of times in which the terms of that decision are repeated.

I observe, then,

I. *The New Testament gives to Christ the appellation of God, in such a manner as that, according to the fair rules of interpretation, only the SUPREME GOD can be meant.*

A conspicuous passage in proof of this I should find in John, i, 1—3. :—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Verse 10. "And the world was made by him."

All known manuscripts agree in the text here. Griesbach has indeed recorded, that, for  $\delta \Theta ε ο ς$  (Theos, God), there is a conjectural reading  $\Theta ε ο υ$  ; and that for  $κα ι \Theta ε ο ς$  κα ι  $\delta \lambda ο γ ο ς$ , there is a conjectural reading of  $\Theta ε ο ς η ν κα ι \delta \lambda ο γ ο ς$ . The first of these conjectures was made by Crellius. (Initium Evang. Johan. restauratum per L. M. Artemonium, P. i. c. 2.) The reason of making such a conjecture Crellius has given.

"The greater Christ is," says he, "compared with other gods (the Father excepted), the less can he be expressly called God, lest he should be taken for the supreme God the Father." And again, "If he (Christ) had been expressly called God by the sacred writers, and had not always been distinguished from God, the sacred writers would have given an occasion to unskilful men to regard him as the supreme God."—INIT. EVANG. JOHAN., p. 295.)

To liberate John from being taxed with this imprudence, Crellius proposed to substitute  $\Theta\epsilon\iota\upsilon$  for  $\Theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ , in John, i. 1.; so as to say, *the Logos was of God*, instead of saying, as John has done, that *He was God*.

The second conjectural reading is supported by no better authority. Bahrdt (in *Neuesten Offenbarungen*), proposed it as a happy expedient to relieve the text from the difficulty and embarrassment under which he thought it laboured. For, instead of saying, "the Word was with God, and the Word was God," he might then translate it thus,—“The Word was with God. God was, and this Word was in the beginning with God,” &c.

I have a great regard for the labours and learning of Griesbach; but I am constrained to ask here, why he should have condescended to notice conjectures so gratuitous and unfounded as these?

I proceed to the explanation of the text.  $\text{Εν ἀρχῇ}$  (*i. e.* in the beginning), corresponds exactly with the Hebrew—Gen. i. 1.\* I cannot embrace the opinion of those critics, who think that the phrase  $\text{ἐν ἀρχῇ}$ , of itself *simply* signifies *from eternity*. Although I believe that the *Logos* did exist from eternity, I do not think it is proved *directly* by this expression. (Compare Gen. i. 1.) That existence from eternity is *implied*, however, may be properly admitted.  $\text{Εν ἀρχῇ}$  is equivalent to  $\text{ἐν ἀρχῇ κόσμου}$ , *in the beginning of the world*, *i. e.* before the world was made; and so agreeing in this particular with the phrase, John, xvii. 5. “the glory that I had with thee before the world was;” and Eph. i. 4. “before the foundation of the world.” To say, with Crellius, that, by  $\text{ἐν ἀρχῇ}$  is meant the *commencement* of preaching the gospel, or the beginning of Christian instruction, would be making John gravely tell us, that, before the *Logos* preached the gospel, he had an existence.

Before the world was created, then, the *Logos* existed. Who or what was this *Logos*? A real existence, or only an attribute of God? A real substance, or only the wisdom, or reason, or power of God?

\* The Hebrew words are omitted in this and some other passages, because their insertion would be of little use to the general reader. The Biblical student may, however, consult the original Hebrew.

It is of no importance, in settling this question, that we should know with certainty whence John derived the appellation *Logos*. In my mind, the most probable account is, that this appellation is bestowed on Christ, in reference to his becoming the instructor or teacher of mankind—the medium of communication between God and them. Be this, however, as it may, the *Logos* appears to be a *real existence*, and not merely an *attribute*. For, *first*,—The attributes of God are nowhere else *personified* by the New Testament writers,—*i. e.* the usage of the New Testament authors is against this mode of writing. *Secondly*,—*Logos*, if considered as an abstract term, or as merely designating an attribute, must mean either *wisdom* or *word*; and in what intelligible sense can the *wisdom* or the *word* of God, in the abstract sense, be said to have “*become flesh and dwelt among us*,” verse 14.; or, why should John select either the *wisdom* or *word* of God as any more concerned with the incarnation than the *benevolence of God*, or the *mercy of God*, which one might suppose would be the attributes more especially displayed in the incarnation? *Thirdly*,—If *Logos* mean here the *power* of God, as many assert, the exposition is attended with the same difficulties. *Fourthly*,—If it mean, as others aver, the *power of God putting itself forth*, *i. e.* in creation, it is liable to the same objections. In short, make it any *attribute* of God thus personified, and you introduce a mode of writing that the New Testament nowhere else displays, and which even the Old Testament exhibits but once, Prov. viii., in a poetic composition of the most animated and exalted nature.

Yet this is not the chief difficulty. To what class of men could John address the asseveration, that the *Logos*, (*wisdom, word, or power of God*), “*was with God*?”

Where did these singular heretics suppose the *power* of God was, except *with him*? Or, where his *wisdom* or his *word*? A peculiar pertinacity, too, in their strange opinion, they must have had, to have rendered it necessary for the Apostle to *repeat*, with emphasis, in the second verse, that this *Logos was with God*. What would be said of a man who should gravely assert that “*the power of Peter is with Peter, or that his wisdom or his word is so*?”



And suppose he should add, "*the power or wisdom of Peter is Peter*," with what class of mystics should we rank him? Yet John adds, "*The Logos was God*." Until, then, some heretics of the apostolic age can be discovered, who maintained that the attributes of God were not *with* him, I cannot explain how the Apostle could assert twice successively, and of course emphatically, that his attributes were *with* him.

Equally difficult is it for me to divine how he could say that any attribute (*power or wisdom*), *was God*—understanding the word God in any sense which you please. If it mean *Supreme God*, then it reduces itself to this, either that one attribute is the supreme God, or that there are as many Gods as attributes. If it mean an *inferior* God, then the *wisdom* of God being an *inferior* God, implies that his other attributes are *superior* Gods; or else that his wisdom holds the place of *quasi* God, while his other attributes occupy a lower place. Suppose that it should be said that *Logos*, or *wisdom*, denotes the essence of God, then how could it be called Θεός, which implies an agent or person—a *concrete*, as logicians say, and not an *abstract*? The divine substance or essence is called ΟυσΙΑ or το Ουσιον, not ὁ Θεός. What could be meant, moreover, by the *essence* of God becoming incarnate?

If, however, it should be said, that to suppose the existence of a sect of heretics, who held that the attributes of God were *not with him*, is unnecessary in order to justify the Apostle for having written the first verse of his gospel, and that we may regard this verse as written simply for general instruction, then I would ask, whether it is probable that a revelation from heaven is made to inform us that the *attributes of a being are with that being*? or what can be thought of the assertion, that the *wisdom or power* of God is God himself?

Let us proceed now to the second clause, "*and the Logos was with God*,"—i. e. as all agree, with God the Father. Compare verses 14 and 18; also chapter xvii. 5, and 1 John, i. 1, 2; which make the point clear. Is this expression capable of any tolerable interpretation, without supposing that the *Logos*, who was *with God*, was in some respect or other different, or *diverse from that God, with*

whom he was? This *Logos* was the same that became incarnate, verse 14; that made the most perfect revelation of the will and character of God to men, verse 18; and was called *Christ*. He was, therefore, in some respect, diverse from the Father, and therefore by no means to be confounded with him.

"*And the Logos was God.*" It has been proposed (in Impr. Vers. of N. Test.), to render the word  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , a god. Does then the Christian Revelation admit of gods superior and inferior? And if so, to what class of inferior gods does the *Logos* belong? And how much would such a theory of divine natures differ from that which admits a Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and gods greater and less?

But it is said, that " $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  is destitute of the article, and, therefore, cannot designate the Divine Being, who is supreme." This observation, however, is far from being justifiable, either by the usage of the sacred writers or the principles of Greek syntax. Among instances where the Supreme God is certainly designated, and yet the article is omitted, the inquirer may consult the very chapter in question, ver. 6, 13, 18; also, Mat. xix. 26; Luke, xvi. 13; John, ix. 33; xvi. 30; Rom. viii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 3; Gal. i. 1; Ephes. ii. 8; Heb. ix. 14. Besides, every reader of Greek knows, that where the subject of a proposition (which in this case is  $\delta\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ ), has the article, the predicate, ( $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ), omits it. Such is Greek usage; and from it dissent only propositions of a reciprocating or convertible nature,—as in verse 4, of the chapter in question. It may be added, too, that if the writer had said,  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \delta\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \eta\nu\ \delta\ \Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , it would have conveyed a very different sense from the proposition as it now stands. He would then have said, *the Logos is the God with whom he is*; whereas I understand  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  here to mean *divine nature*, simply but not abstractly considered, for which it so often stands in other places. *Vide* Mark, viii. 33; x. 27; xii. 24; Luke, iii. 8; xi. 20; xviii. 4, 19; John, i. 13; iii. 2; iv. 24; x. 33; Acts, v. 29; vii. 55; x. 33; xi. 18, &c.

I readily acknowledge, that affirmative evidence of the somewhat diverse meaning of  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  here, cannot be drawn from the word itself, but must be deduced from the cir-

cumstances of the affirmation, united with the supposition that John did assert, and did mean to assert, something that is intelligible. There is, indeed, no very serious difficulty in taking  $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , (*God*), in the same sense in both clauses, provided we understand it to denote the Divinity. To interpret the verse thus, would represent John as saying, that while Christ was God or truly divine, there was at the same time a sense in which he was *with* God. In order that this should have any possible meaning, a distinction in the Godhead must be admitted,—viz. that the Father is not in all respects the same as the Son.

For myself, I do not hesitate to understand the word *God*, in a sense somewhat diverse, in the two clauses of the verse under consideration. Every word takes a sense adapted to its connexion. Such is the rule which must be adopted, after we have once conceded that a writer uses words with propriety, and designs to be understood. So, when our Saviour says, "Let the dead bury their dead," the connexion requires us to explain it thus,—*"Let those who are morally or spiritually dead, bury those who are corporeally so."* It were easy to accumulate examples, where the very same word, in the very same verse, has two different shades of sense. The exigency of the passage (*exigentia loci*), is the rule of interpretation which guides us here: And, guided by this exigency, what difficulty is there in supposing that *God*, as Father, is meant in the first instance, and the Divinity, without reference to the peculiar distinction of *Father*, in the second?

I understand John, then, as affirming, that the *Logos* was God, and yet was with God,—viz. that he was truly divine, but still divine in such a manner that there did exist a distinction between him and the Father. I take the word *God*, in one case, to mean, as in a great number of cases it does mean, God as Father; in the other case, I regard it as a description of divine being of the Divinity, without reference to the distinction of Father,—a use which is very common.

Least of all have those a right to object to this, who here make the meaning of *God*, in the second instance, to be infinitely different from its meaning in the first instance,



—understanding, by the first, the self-existent, independent, and infinite God; by the second, a created or derived and finite being.

If you ask now, What could be the object of John, in asserting that *the Logos was with God*? I answer, that the phrase, *to be with one*, (ἔναι πρὸς τινά), indicates *conjunction, communion, familiarity, society*. See Mark, ix. 19. Compare, too, John, i. 18, where the only-begotten Son is said to be “in the bosom (ἐν τῷ κολπῷ) of the Father,” which is a phrase of similar import.

To illustrate the meaning of the phrase *to be with God*, it is useful also to compare those cases where Christians are promised, as the summit of their felicity, that they shall *be with God* and Christ, and be where they are. See, among other passages, John, xiv. 2, 3; xii. 26; xvii. 24; 1 Thess. iv. 17. Compare Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; Coloss. iii. 1—4.

In John, xvii. 5, Christ speaks of that “glory which he had *with the Father*, before the world was.” From all these passages taken together, it would seem that the phrase, *the Logos was with God*, amounts to asserting that he was (*conjunctissimus Deo*), *most intimately connected with him*. If you ask me *how*, I answer freely that I cannot tell. The Evangelist has asserted the *fact*, but has not added one word to explain the (*modus*) manner. If I could explain it, then, perhaps, I might define the distinction which I believe to exist in the Godhead.

But why should John assert such a connexion?—In opposition, I answer, to those in early times, who asserted that Christ was a being not only *distinct from God*, but *an emanation from him*. The asseveration, that the *Logos was with God*—was from the beginning most intimately connected with him and was *divine*—would, of course, contradict such an opinion.

But, does the Evangelist here mean to assert of the *Logos*, that he is God in the true and supreme sense, or not? This is the fundamental question between us. Analogy, drawn from the New Testament usage of the word Θεός, (which nowhere else employs this word simply and singly, except to designate the Supreme God), must be admitted strongly to favour the idea, that Christ is here

asserted to be truly divine. I readily allow, that, in the Old Testament, the word *God* has various applications—that it is applied (though only in the plural number) to magistrates—that it is used to designate those who, for a time, stand, as it were, in the place of God, as Moses was to be for a *god* to Pharaoh, Exod. vii. 1, and instead of God to Aaron, Exod. iv. 16. But it is not possible, in any instances of this nature, to mistake the meaning. The adjuncts or context always guard effectually against mistake. Men, or inferior beings, are never called *God*, or gods, *simply*. We read of a “god to Pharaoh;” we read, also, “I have said ye are gods, *but ye shall die like men.*” The Scriptures speak of the god of Ekron, the god of the Ammonites, the gods of the Heathen, &c. Is a mistake possible here? But the *Logos* is called *God simply*. Nor is this all. Admitting that the name of itself determines nothing, (and, for the sake of argument, I am willing to admit it), yet the writer has added explanations of his meaning, which seem to place what he intended to assert, by the expression in question, beyond the reach of fair debate.

John, i. 3. “All things were [made] by him; and without him was nothing [made] which was [made].” Verse 10, “The world was [made] by him.”

I have excluded the word *made*, by placing it in brackets, merely to show that the sense is in nowise changed by the version of those critics, who tell us that ἐγένετο never means *made*, but simply *was*. Yet nothing can be farther from correctness than such an assertion. Accordingly, ποιεω and γινωμαι are used as synonymes,—as in James, iii. 9; compare Gen. i. 26, in the Septuagint; Gen. ii. 4; Isaiah, xlviii. 7. The cases where γινωμαι means to *make*, or *produce*, are so numerous and obvious, that a moment's delay in respect to this part of the subject would be useless. Schleusner's Lexicon, under the word γινωμαι, will furnish adequate proof of this. If not, read the Commentary of Theodoret on the two first chapters of Genesis, which places the question, as to the use of γινωμαι, beyond debate.

But what are the “all things”—the *universe* (τα παντα)—which the *Logos* made or created?—“The moral world

—the Christian Church," answers Faustus Socinus. To this exposition, however, there are two objections. *First*, a part of these *τα πάντα* are, in verse 10, represented as (*ὁ κόσμος*) *the world*,—a term nowhere in the New Testament applied to the Christian Church, nor to men as morally amended by the gospel. *Secondly*, this very world (*ὁ κόσμος*), which he created, *did not know or acknowledge him*, *αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνων*: Whereas the distinguishing trait of Christians is, that they *know Christ*—that they *know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*.

*Τα πάντα*, then, which the Logos created, means, (as common usage and the exigency of the passage require), *the universe*—the worlds, material and immaterial. (Ver. 10.) Here, consequently, in the First Chapter of John, is a passage in which, beyond all reasonable doubt, Christ is called *God*; and where the context, instead of furnishing us with reasons for understanding the word *God* in an inferior sense, (as is usual when this designation is applied to inferior beings), has plainly and unequivocally taught us, that this *God*, (*Θεός*), who was the *Logos*, *created the universe*. The question, then, is reduced to this simple state,—Is he, who created the universe, truly and properly divine? On this question I shall make a few remarks, when I have considered some other passages which ascribe the work of creation to Christ.

Heb. i. 10—12. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

These words are spoken of the *Son of God*: for they are intimately connected by the conjunction *and* with ver. 8, where it is written, "But unto the *Son* he saith," &c. According to the laws of grammar, and most clearly according to the nature and design of the Apostle's argument, the ellipsis is to be supplied, in the beginning of the tenth verse, after *and* (*καὶ*) is, "And [*to the Son he saith*] Thou, Lord," &c. No other exposition can be pointed



out, which doth not make a violent divulsion of the passage from the connexion of the writer's argument.

The question still remains, "What is meant by *founding the earth*, and by the heavens being the work of Christ's hands?" To answer the first question, and place the answer beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt, it is necessary only to compare the passages in which Jehovah is said to have *founded the earth*. By this phrase, the *creation* of it is indubitably meant. The passages may be found in Ps. xxiv. 2; lxxxix. 11; civ. 5; cxix. 90; Job, xxxviii. 4; Prov. iii. 19; Is. xlviii. 13; li. 13; Zech. xii. 1; where, if you inspect the Septuagint, you will see the very verb θεμελιω (themelio—to found, to establish), employed, which the Apostle uses in our text.

In regard to the "heavens being the works of Christ's hands," it is an expression plainly of similar import to the one just examined, and signifies the *creation* of the heavens. Thus, Ps. viii. 3, 6—"When I consider the heavens, *the work of thy hands*;" which is parallel with, "The moon and stars which thou hast ordained," (Septuagint, ἐθεμελιωσας). So, in verse 6th, "And hast placed him *over the work of thy hands*; all things hast thou put under his feet,"—i. e. placed him over the *creation*.

To prove that the phrase, to *create the heavens and the earth*, means to create *all things*, it is necessary only to consult Gen. i. 1; Exod. xx, 11; xxxi. 17; Neh. ix. 6; Ps. cxxi. 2; cxxiv. 8; cxxxiv. 3; and other like passages, which a Concordance will supply.

It will be remembered, that the passage in question, (Heb. i. 10—12), is a quotation from the Old Testament; and that, to quote the language of the Old Testament, therefore, in order to explain it, is peculiarly appropriate and necessary.

Would any one, now, unembarrassed by peculiarity of system, ever suspect that Christ's *founding the earth, and the heavens being the works of his hands*, could mean any thing less than the creation of the Universe? Yet we have been told, by some distinguished Unitarians, that the *heavens* mean the Christian state or dispensation, and earth the *Jewish* one.

But, *first*, this is against usage, either in the Old or New

Testament,—there being nothing to support such a sense of it. Isaiah, indeed, speaks of *creating a NEW heaven and a NEW earth*, (lxv. 17) ; and of *planting the heavens and the earth*, (li. 16), in a moral sense, *i. e.* making a moral change or creation. But then the language itself, in the first case, indicates, that the *old* creation is NOT meant ; and, in the second case, the context makes it as clear what kind of heaven and earth is to be planted or established, and what the planting of them means,—viz. the Jewish church and state is to be renewed and established. The meaning, then, assigned by some Unitarians to the passage in Heb. i., is against the plain and perpetual usage of the Scriptures, in regard to such expressions, when they occur in an *unlimited form*, as they do in the passage under examination.

*Secondly*,—If the Jewish and the Christian states are here meant, in what sense are they to wax old as a garment, and to be changed ? Of the Jewish state this might without much difficulty be affirmed. But how the Christian dispensation is to be changed—how that “ kingdom which *shall have no end*,” (Luke, i. 33), is to “ perish,” I am unable to explain.

“ It is a moral creation, of which Christ is the author,” says Artemonius, *i. e.* Crellius (Init. Evang. Johan).—This, however, does not explain the matter : for, how is it that the *moral creation* of Christ is to be *changed* and *perish*, *i. e.* to be annihilated ? Most obviously his moral creation is to be eternal.

Another method of explaining this subject has been, to aver that the passage here quoted by the Apostle, from Ps. cii. 25—27, is, in the original, plainly applicable to Jehovah only ; and that none would conjecture, from the simple perusal of this Psalm, how Christ could be the subject of it. Conceding that the passage is applicable to Jehovah only, (and it would be difficult to show why this is not to be conceded), what is the consequence ?—Either that the Apostle has directly, and without qualification, applied to Christ language used by an inspired writer of the Old Testament, to designate the Creator of the world, with his eternal and immutable nature ; or, that he has, (in a way singular indeed for a man of piety and honesty),

accommodated language descriptive of the infinite Jehovah only, to a created and dependent being. *Κυριος* (*Lord*) in the Greek, corresponds to the word *Jehovah* in the original Hebrew—the Septuagint having commonly rendered it in this manner. And, though *Jehovah* is not in the Hebrew text, (Ps. cii. 25), yet it is evident, from the preceding context, that it must be understood there as the subject of the verb, *thou hast founded*. Christ, then, is here called by the Apostle, *Jehovah*; and *eternity, immutability, and the creation of the universe*, are ascribed to him.\*

I cannot think that the paraphrase of Grotius, on the passage in question, deserves a serious refutation. “Thou wast the cause,” says he, “that the earth was founded; and on thy account the heavens were made.” If this be not a different thing from what the language of the Apostle naturally means, or can mean, I confess I know not any bounds which may be set to paraphrastic or mystical exegesis. Suppose now the Gnostics, who maintained that evil demons, and not Jehovah, created the world, should have paraphrased the first verse in Genesis in this manner, —“Thou, Jehovah, wast the cause why the heavens and the earth were created;” and, when asked how this could consist with their sentiments, or what they could mean by it, they should have replied, “Out of enmity to thee, the evil demons brought the material creation into existence,” then they would have explained away the creative act of Jehovah, exactly as Grotius explains away the evidence that Christ was the Creator.

Col. i. 15—17. “Who is the image of the invisible God, the head of all creation; for, by him were all things

\* I readily admit, that *κυριος* is not always synonymous with *Jehovah*: But where the word *Jehovah* is used in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, *κυριος* stands, in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, as the translation of it. Therefore, *κυριος*, in the New Testament, must, of course, in such cases, have the same meaning as *Jehovah* in the Old Testament. The reason why *κυριος* is used by the New Testament writers as the translation of *Jehovah* in the Hebrew Scriptures, is, that the Jews, in reading their sacred writings, were not accustomed to pronounce the word *Jehovah*, but read, for the most part, *Lord*, *κυριος*, in the room of it.



created, both celestial and terrestrial, visible and invisible, of whatever order or rank they are—all things were created by him and for him. Therefore, he was before all things, and by him are all things sustained."

The places in which I have departed from our common version, are not differently rendered in order to make them favour the cause which I have espoused; for they determine nothing respecting the point now at issue. They are rendered as above, merely to make the meaning of the passage in general as plain as the nature of the case will permit.

Because, in verse 20th, Christ is said "to reconcile (*ἀποκαταλλάττει*) all things unto himself," and these are said to be "things in heaven and things on earth;" and, afterwards, he is represented as breaking down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. Some ingenious commentators have supposed that "things in heaven and things on earth," mean *Jews and Gentiles*. How very unnatural this explanation is, no one can help feeling, who reads the passage in an unbiassed manner. In what tolerable sense can the Jews and Gentiles be called "things visible and invisible?" or how shall we explain the phrase, "things in heaven and things on earth," as applied to them? By "reconciling things in heaven and things on earth," seems evidently to be meant, bringing into union, under one great head, *i. e.* Christ, by a new and special bond of intercommunication, both angels and men. In like manner, the two great parties on earth, Jews and Gentiles, are united together. But why Christ should be called "the image of the invisible God," and the "head (*πρωτοτοκος*, *the first born*) of all creation," because he is merely the instrument of bringing Jews and Gentiles together, is not apparent to me. Yet, to be such an instrument, is all that the passage in question ascribes to him, if we are to construe it in the manner above related. But, when you understand the words of the Apostle, as describing the creation of the worlds celestial and terrestrial, (*οἱ οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ*, compare Heb. i. 10—12), and ascribing it to Christ, then you find sufficient reason for designating him by the exalted appellations in question.

It has also been affirmed, that a *moral creation* only is

here ascribed to Christ. But words like these, in such a connexion and with such adjuncts, are nowhere else used in this sense. Moreover, in what sense has the *moral creation* by Christ affected the angels? The good ones needed not repentance or pardon; the bad ones have never sought or obtained either. "Verily, he did not assist the angels, (ὅν γὰρ θεοῦ ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται), but the seed of Abraham."—Heb. ii. 16.

Until I see different light, therefore, shed over the passage in question, I must regard it as very clearly ascribing the creation of the universe to Christ.

But you will say, perhaps, that in John, i. 3, "All things are said to be made *by Christ*, διὰ Χριστοῦ, as the *instrumental*, not the *principal* cause,—the preposition διὰ denoting such cause. In Col. i. 16, it is also said, that all things were created *by Christ* (δι' αὐτοῦ); and in Heb. i. 2, God is said to have created the worlds *by his Son*,—Δι' οὗ (sc. υἱοῦ) καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν."

The allegation, however, that διὰ does not designate the *principal* as well as the *instrumental* cause, can by no means be supported. In Rom. xi. 36, "All things are said to be of God (ἐξ αὐτοῦ) and by God (δι' αὐτοῦ);" the very form of expression applied to Christ, in Col. i. 16—20. So, Heb. ii. 10, "For it became him, (God the Father), for whom δι' οὗ, are all things, and by whom, δι' οὗ, are all things," &c. 1 Cor. i. 9, "God is faithful, by whom, δι' οὗ, ye were called into the fellowship of his Son," &c. Moreover, ἐκ and διὰ are sometimes interchanged as equivalents or synonymes. See Rom. iii. 30. So also, ἐν and διὰ, Col. i. 16,—τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτισθῆναι and δι' αὐτοῦ ἐκιστῆναι,—i. e. ἐν and διὰ, in these two phrases, are of the same import. See Schleusner's Lex. in voc. διὰ.

The difficulty remaining is, to explain the phrase, "by whom δι' οὗ he (the Father) made the worlds;" Heb. i. 2. The Apostle has added sufficient, in verses 10—12, as it might seem, to prevent mistake here. If, however, the difficulty seems still to press, it may be compared with Hos. i. 7, "I (Jehovah) will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them *by Jehovah*." Is the second Jehovah merely the *instrumental* cause in this case? Of the same nature is the phraseology in Gen. xix. 24, "And

*Jehovah* rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrha fire and brimstone FROM JEHOVAH out of heaven." Must the *last Jehovah*, in this case, be a being inferior to the *first*? If not, then the phrase that *God made the worlds by his Son*, does not imply, of course, that the Son is of an inferior nature. It does imply that there is a distinction between the Father and the Son; and this is what we aver to be a Scripture doctrine. It seems to declare, also, that *the God-head, in respect to the distinction of Son, was in a special manner concerned with the creation of the worlds*. What is there impossible or improbable in this?

From the passages of Scripture thus far considered, it appears plain that the Apostles have ascribed the creation of the universe to Christ. And now we come, in order, to the consideration of the simple question, whether he who created the world is really and truly divine.

First, then, permit me to ask, If the act of creation does not prove the being who performs it to be omniscient, omnipotent, and independent, is it possible for me to conceive of any thing which does or can prove the existence of such a being? To bring this world into existence from nothing—to establish such perfect concord and design through all the operations of nature—to set in motion the unnumbered worlds and systems of worlds, and all in the most perfect harmony and order—requires more intelligence, more power, and more wisdom, than ever belonged to any finite being. And if these things do not characterise the infinite being, it seems to me no proof that such a being exists can be adduced.

It is in vain to tell me here that the creation of the universe can be performed by *delegation*—by an inferior and subordinate being. What can be meant by omnipotence and infinite wisdom, (all of which must belong to a Creator), being *delegated*? Can God *delegate* his *perfections*? If so, then the Gnostics, when pressed with the argument that *Jehovah*, the God of the Jews, was the Supreme God, because he created the heavens and the earth, might have replied, that he did this only by *delegated power*; and that the act of creation, therefore, proves nothing. You reply to such an allegation, that the act of creating the universe is one which no finite or secondary being can per-



form. If this act do not designate the absolute, Supreme, omnipotent and omniscient Being, then no proof that such a Being exists can possibly be adduced.

We use the very same arguments to confute those who maintain that Christ created the world by *delegated* power. The Apostle, having decided the question that Christ did create the world, has decided, consequently, that he must be *truly divine*.

Agreeably to this reasoning, the Bible everywhere appeals to *creative power* as the peculiar and distinguishing prerogative of the Supreme God ; and attributes it solely to Jehovah. Read Gen. ii. 2, 3 ; Exod. xx. 11 ; Is. xlv. 24 ; Jer. x. 12 ; Ps. viii. 3, 4 ; cii. 25, and other passages of the same tenour. Read Is. xl., and onward, where God, by his Prophet, makes a most solemn challenge to all polytheists to bring the objects of their worship into competition with him, and declares himself to be distinguished from them all, by his being " the Creator of the ends of the earth," (verse 28), and by his having formed and arranged the heavens, (verse 26).

Can it be made plainer than these passages make it, that *creative power* was regarded by the Hebrew Prophets as the *appropriate* and *peculiar* attribute of the Supreme God ? Need I say, that the Old Testament is filled with passages which ascribe the work of creation to Jehovah alone ? Who does not find them everywhere intermixed, in the most delightful and affecting manner, with all the instructions of the sacred Hebrew writers ?

Now, if a subordinate agent, a *finite spirit*, did create the universe, why should all the instructions of the Old Testament be so framed, as inevitably to lead the Jewish nation to disbelieve and reject this fact ? Specially so, as the Jews were strongly inclined to polytheism, and a plurality of gods would have been very agreeable to their wishes. And why, after a lapse of so many centuries, should the writers of the New Testament overturn all that the Hebrew Scriptures had taught on this subject, and lead men to admit that a *finite being* could and did create the world ? Most of all, how could Paul say, (Rom. i. 20), that the Heathen were without excuse for not acknowledging the *eternal power and Godhead* of the Divi-

nity, from the evidence which his CREATING power afforded—from considering the THINGS THAT WERE MADE?

And is this truth (that the Deity possesses eternal power and Godhead) so plain, then, and so easily deduced from CREATING ENERGY, that the very Heathen are destitute of all excuse for not seeing and admitting it; and yet, can it be the object of Christianity to bring us back to the very polytheism for which the Apostle condemned them—to bring us to “worship the *creature* more than the CREATOR?” Does Christianity contradict a truth of natural religion so plain and incontrovertible, that the very Heathen were without excuse for not acknowledging it? And, after reading such a passage in the writings of Paul, can it be possible to suppose, that he ascribed the creation of the world to any thing but the true God only? Compare now Acts, xvii. 23—26. with John, i. 1—3, and 10; Heb. i. 10—12; Coloss. i. 14—17; and then say, is it possible to admit the rules of interpretation which you have laid down, and not admit that the Apostles designed to assert that Christ is the Creator of the Universe? And if he is so, is it possible to deny that he is *truly divine*?

It were easy to produce passages of the New Testament, which ascribe the same works to Christ as to God, (as John, v. 17—23; xiv. 9, 11). But, as the vindication of these would swell these Letters beyond their proper length, I shall not enter into a discussion of them at present. I am not anxious to increase the number of witnesses; for, acknowledging the New Testament to be of divine authority, I consider whatever it plainly declares once, to be the truth. The *relevancy* and *plainness* of the testimony, therefore, is more the object of my solicitude, than the *number of* witnesses,—a point, I may add, in which many, who have defended our sentiments, have greatly erred.

I shall proceed, therefore, to other texts of Scripture, in which Christ is declared to be God.

Rom. ix. 5, “Whose are the Fathers; and from whom, in respect to the flesh, (his human nature), Christ (descended), who is the Supreme God, blessed for ever. Amen!”

In regard to this text, it may be remarked, *first*, that

although Griesbach has filled his margin with conjectural and other readings, he attributes no considerable weight to any of them; for, *all the manuscripts* of the Epistle to the Romans, which have been collated, *contain the text as it stands*; as do *all the ancient versions*, and *nearly all the Fathers*.

In rendering το κατὰ σάρκα, *in respect to his human nature*, I feel supported by corresponding passages, in Rom. i. 3; \* Acts, ii. 30. And that ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων Θεὸς εὐλογητός εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, is literally translated, *who is Supreme God, blessed for ever*, may be shown in various ways. Ὁ ὢν is here put, as in common, (see John, i. 18; iii. 13; 2 Cor. xi. 31), for ὅς ἐστι, *who is*. The ground of this lies simply in the nature of Greek usage. Whenever ὁ is used for ὅς, it takes the participle ὢν instead of the verb ἐστι. The Greeks say ὁ ὢν, but ὅς ἐστι.

Ἐπὶ πάντων Θεὸς is, literally, "*over-all God*," i. e. Supreme God. Compare with the phraseology here, the word πάντα (*all*), as used in a connexion which respects Christ, in Col. i. 17; Eph. i. 19, 23; John, iii. 31; and 1 Cor. xv. 27. It is used in such passages as a term of qualification which serves to describe him as the *head* or *ruler* of the universe. What, then, can ἐπὶ πάντων Θεὸς mean, but *Supreme God*?

But, on no text has greater pains been bestowed, in order to devise an unusual construction and meaning.—Schlichting proposed to transpose ὁ ὢν, and read ὢν ὁ, i. e. *of whom*, (the Jewish Fathers), *is God, blessed for ever*. But as, in this very Epistle, the Apostle has laboured to prove that God is as well the God of the Gentiles as the Jews, (ch. iii. 29), this expedient would seem to impeach the Apostle's consistency, as well as violate the text. Nor would the text itself, as amended by Schlichting's conjecture, be in any measure accordant with the idiom of the Greek language. If Θεός has the article (and his transposition makes it ὁ Θεός), then εὐλογητός must of necessity have it too,—inasmuch as an adjective following a noun with an article, and agreeing with it, of necessity takes the article.

\* As it stands in the Textus Receptus.



Wetstein's conjecture, that it should be read ὁ ὧν, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεός, is not more fortunate. Such a mode of expression as ὁ ὧν ὁ, all relating to the same subject, is repugnant to Greek usage. Besides, this conjecture, like that of Schlichting, not only violates the integrity of the text, but assigns the article to Θεός, and omits it before εὐλογητός, which is surely inadmissible.

Enough of amending the Apostle's words by conjecture, without the authority of a single manuscript or version. Critical acumen has also employed itself in dividing and translating the verse in question, in a manner different from that in our common Testament. The late Professor Justi, at Marburg, a man of great acuteness and fine taste, undertook to defend the ingenious supposition, that the latter part of the verse is a doxology. He renders it,—“Whose ancestors were those [renowned] Fathers from whom the Messiah, as to his mortal body, was derived, who is exalted over all [the Fathers]. God be blessed for ever!” Thus, by the aid of supplying an idea not contained in the text, and by doing violence to the custom of language, in the doxological part, he has devised a method in which we may avoid the assertion, that Christ is *God over all*, or *Supreme God*. But who does not perceive the violence and inaptitude of the divulsion which he makes, by separating the former from the latter part of the verse? Besides, how would a doxology fit the passage in question? Crellius (Init. Evang. Johan. p. 230, 237), long ago, was candid enough to own, that when the Apostle was affected with the greatest sadness, on account of the unbelief of his Jewish brethren, and the loss of their privileges, a *doxology* was not very congruous. A prayer (as in ch. x. 1.), would seem, as he thinks, to be much more appropriate.

Omitting, however, all this, it may be added, that Greek usage, by no possibility, admits of the doxological version of Justi. Θεός εὐλογητός means, *God who is blessed*, i. e. the proposition in such a case is assumed, not asserted. But εὐλογητός ὁ Θεός means, *God be blessed; let God be blessed or praised*. In accordance with this Greek usage, we find five instances of doxology in the New Testament, and about forty in the Old, in which εὐλογητός is uniformly

placed FIRST. The same order is observed in respect to *καταρατος*, (cursed), when an imprecation is uttered.

Besides, the text must be changed to make out a doxology; and we must read *ὁ Θεός* instead of *Θεός*; for universal usage prescribes *ἐνλογητος ὁ Θεός*. (The instance Ps. lxxviii. 19; Sept., brought by Stolz in his *Erläuterungen*, &c. to support Justi's rendering, depends merely on wrong punctuation, and the repetition of a word which does not correspond to the Hebrew text.)

Finally, if a doxology to the Father were intended here, it is scarcely possible to suppose that a particle of transition, (*δε*, for instance), should not have been inserted, in order to give notice of so great a change. In any other case, we should expect to find it thus,—*ὁ δε ὦν*; or, if the doxology begin at *Θεός*, then *ἐνλογητος ὁ Θεός*. No text, no manuscript, no ancient version, gives us a trace of either of these readings. To invent them, therefore, and force them upon the text, or to substitute a conjecture, which originated from theological speculation, against the plain and incontrovertible evidence of the integrity of the text, what is it but to introduce a principle fundamentally subversive of all interpretation and criticism, and give up the Scriptures to be moulded to every man's own wishes?

All conjectures and theories, then, appear to be quite incompetent to explain away the common rendering of the verse, and the meaning connected with it. On the other hand, we may ask, How comes it that Christ, according to his human nature, (*το κατὰ σαρκά*), is said to have descended from the Fathers? What if I should affirm that David, as to his human nature, was descended from Jesse? Would you not, of course, ask, what other nature had he except human? And such an inquiry, forced upon us by the expression in question, the Apostle has immediately answered. As to his nature not human, he was "Supreme God, blessed for ever. Amen!" To have produced the human nature connected with such an exalted Being, the Apostle reckons as one of the special privileges which the Jews had enjoyed. See and compare Rom. ix. 1—4.

I do not argue that Christ is divine, merely from having the appellation *Θεός*, bestowed upon him. But, if *ὁ ὦν ἐπὶ*

παντων Θεος be not *Supreme God*, and if the *antithesis* in this verse do not require us to understand a divine nature here, then I must despair of discovering the sentiment of any text of Scripture, by using any of the rules of exegesis.

Heb. i. 8, 9. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

This passage is quoted from Ps. xlv. 6, 7. It has been objected, that ὁ Θεός here should not be translated as the vocative, but nominative,—*e. g.* "God is thy throne for ever and ever, or thine everlasting throne, or eternal support."

To this it may be replied, ὁ Θεός is the *common* vocative of the *New Testament and Septuagint*. No objection to the usual rendering of this verse in the vocative case can be made from the *form* of the word, which is altogether common in Hellenistic Greek.\* The Attics use the same form of the noun, but they write it ὦ Θεός, and not ὁ Θεός. One needs only to open his Septuagint, in the Book of Psalms, or in almost any other part, to see incontrovertible evidence that ὁ Θεός is the common vocative of the *Hellenistic* writers.

To the translation, "God is thy throne," *i. e.* thy support, several objections may be made.

1. Greek *usage* does not permit such a version. The subject and predicate cannot both have the article, unless in the case of a convertible or reciprocal sentence; and, surely, it will not be urged that such is the present case. "God is thy throne," would stand, in Greek, Θεός σου ὁ Θεός.† For such a change in the text there is no respectable authority.

2. Such a translation would render insipid the argu-

\* There were several dialects of the Greek language, the Attic, the Doric, &c. The Hellenistic Greek is a mixed dialect, which prevailed in the countries and periods in which the New Testament writers lived.—Ed.

† See the latter clause of the verse, where ἡ βασιλεία is the subject, but ἡ ἐκκλησία the predicate, according to the laws of the language.



ment of the Apostle, in this chapter, to prove the preëminently exalted nature of Christ. To say of this illustrious personage, God is thy throne, *i. e.* thy support, might excite the persons to whom the epistle was addressed, to ask, "And who is not supported by God? How is Christ entitled, on this account, to claim any *preëminence* in our regard?"

3. Such a translation contradicts the meaning of the word *throne*, understood either literally or figuratively. Literally, it is the *seat* on which kings seat. This sense is here out of the question. *Figuratively*, it stands for *dominion, empire, regal authority*; because it is one of the ensigns of such authority. But there is no such figurative sense to it as that of *support*. And what sense would it make to say, *God is thy dominion, thy regal authority*? If you reply, This may mean, God is the cause of thy *dominion or regal authority*, then I ask again, Of what king's dominion and authority is not God the cause? Is it not the universal doctrine of the Bible that "*by Him* kings reign and princes decree justice?" And how, then, is Christ entitled to any *preëminence* because God is the cause of his dominion? Or, what advances does the Apostle make in his argument by such an assertion?

To the translation in question there is still another objection, which is drawn from the nature of Hebrew parallelism in poetry. The verse under discussion plainly is one in which the *subject* is the same in both parts, *i. e.* it is a synonymous parallelism. Now, the second member of this is, "The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness;" in other words, *thy dominion is righteous*. The first member of the parallelism, consequently, is to be explained in a similar way, and evidently means *thy dominion (throne) is everlasting*. What could be more tasteless or unmeaning here than to say, "God is thy throne,"—*i. e.* support, or cause of dominion—when the object of the writer is to show the *preëminent* dignity of the Son of God?

The proposed mode of rendering, then, violates Greek usage—frustrates the argument of the Apostle—forces an unexampled meaning upon *ἰσχυρός*;—and transgresses the

laws of parallelism in the Hebrew original, from which the passage was taken.

I am aware of the objections which have been made to understanding the word *God*, in the passage now under consideration, in its highest sense. For, first,—It is said that the person called *God*, (*Elohim*), here calls another being *his God*, and therefore he cannot be Supreme.

To the *fact* I readily assent; but the *conclusion* drawn from it I must be permitted to doubt. If Christ be described in the Forty-fifth Psalm, (and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts this to be the fact), he is described as a king triumphant over his enemies. As the Messiah, the anointed king, he might, with the greatest propriety, call Jehovah his God—for, as Messiah, he is to be considered as incarnate—and, of course, subordinate. It is still a matter of wonder, that the same person could at one time be called *God*, and have everlasting dominion ascribed to him, who, the next moment, calls Jehovah *his God*? It is a wonder of the same nature, as that which perplexed the Jews, when Christ asked them how David could call the Messiah *Lord*, while at the same time he was his Son. It is a wonder which no ground but that of Trinitarians can ever explain. I mean, the ground that the divine and human natures coexisted in Christ, and that, in the same sentence, he could, with propriety, speak of himself as human and divine. The sacred writers appear not to take the least pains to separate the two natures, in any thing which they say of either. They everywhere speak of Christ, (so it appears to me), as either human or divine, or both. They do not seem to apprehend any danger of mistake in regard to the subject, no more than we when we say, Abraham is dead, or Abraham is alive, think it necessary to add, *as to his body*, in one case, or *as to his soul*, in the other.

This very negligence, (if I may be allowed the expression, saving every thing that would imply improper want of care), offers a powerful argument to me, I confess, to prove that the sacred writers regarded the human and divine natures as so intimately connected in Christ, that it was unnecessary and inexpedient to attempt a distinctive

separation of them, on every occasion which brought to view the person or actions of Christ.

A second objection is urged,—viz. that the king, who is the subject of the Forty-fifth Psalm, not only calls God *his* God, but is said to be “anointed with the oil of gladness, above his fellows.” If Christ be truly divine, how, it is asked, can he have *fellows*, *i. e.* equals?

The answer to this has, in substance, already been given. Christ is introduced here as the incarnate Messiah. To the *office of king*, God “consecrated him with the oil of gladness,” *i. e.* placed him in a royal station; he has the “oil of gladness above his fellows,” or a rank above those who also hold a regal office.

It has been objected, thirdly, that the Forty-fifth Psalm, from which our text was taken, does not belong to the Messiah, but to David or Solomon. But how is this proved? “The language,” it is said, “is such, as to show that it is a mere epithalamium, or nuptial ode, on the marriage of one of these kings with a foreign princess.” I have no time to enter into a discussion of this topic here; but I am satisfied that the difficulties which press upon such a view of the Forty-fifth Psalm are overwhelming. Whatever may be said, moreover, to prove this, unless it be palpable demonstration, cannot weigh much in the minds of those who regard the authority of the writer that composed the Epistle to the Hebrews. He has told us that the passage in question is *addressed to his Son*.

Here, then, if our view be correct, is one instance more in which Christ is called God, with adjuncts which render it probable that the Supreme God is meant.

I should rank the texts which I have already produced, as the leading ones to establish the divine nature of Christ. But there are others which should not be neglected, in an impartial examination of Scripture evidence, on the present topic.

1 John, v. 20, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”



There are two reasons here why (ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός) *the true God* may be referred to Christ. 1. The grammatical construction favours it. Christ is the immediate antecedent. I grant that pronouns sometimes relate to a more remote antecedent; but cases of this nature stand on the ground of necessity, not of common grammatical usage. What doubt can there be that John could, without scruple, call the *Logos* the *true God*, (ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός), whom he had before asserted to be *God*, and to have created all things?

But, secondly, my principal reason for referring *the true God* (ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός) to Christ, is the other adjunct which stands with it: "This is the true God—and the ETERNAL LIFE." How familiar is this language with John, as applied to Christ! "In him (*i. e.* Christ) was LIFE; this LIFE was the light of men—giving LIFE to the world—the bread of LIFE—my words are spirit and LIFE—I am the way, the truth, and the LIFE—the *Logos* of LIFE. This LIFE (Christ) was manifested, and we have *seen it*, and do testify to you and declare the ETERNAL LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us." 1 John, i. 2. Now, as I cannot find any instance in John's writings in which the appellation of LIFE and *eternal LIFE* is bestowed upon the Father, to designate him as the author of spiritual and eternal life—and as this occurs so frequently in John's writings, as applied to Christ—the laws of exegesis compel me here to accord in my exposition with the common laws of grammar, and to construe both ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός and ἡ ζωὴ αἰώνιος, (or, as some manuscripts, more consonantly with Greek idiom, read ἡ ζωὴ ἡ αἰώνιος), both of Christ. If the *true God* then be not really divine, who is?

John, xx. 28. "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."

I have three reasons for adducing this text. 1. There is no satisfactory proof that it is an exclamation of surprise or astonishment. No phrase of this kind, by which the Jews were accustomed to express surprise or astonishment, has yet been produced; and there is no evidence that such a phrase, with the sense alleged, belongs to this language. 2. The Evangelist tells us, that Thomas addressed himself to JESUS; said to him ἵπεν αὐτῷ; he did not merely *exclaim*. 3. The commendation which the Saviour immediately be-

stows upon Thomas, serves chiefly to defend the meaning that I attach to the verse. Christ commends him for having seen and believed. The evidence that he believed was contained in the expression under examination; for, before uttering this expression, he is represented as doubting. On the supposition, then, that the expression was a mere exclamation, what evidence was it to the mind of Jesus, or could it be to the minds of others, that he admitted the claims of the Saviour of men, to the character which was connected with this office? What more proof of real belief can be found in such an *exclamation*, if it be truly one, than we can find that men are Christians, when they repeat, as is very common on occasions of surprise or delight, the name of Christ, by way of exclamation? But, if we admit that the words of Thomas were the proper evidence and expression of that belief, for which the Saviour commended him, (and I do not see how we can fairly avoid this), then we must admit that he will commend us, for believing that he is both *Lord and God*, *Κυριος και Θεος*, unless we adopt the notable expedient of Schlichting, who avers that *Lord* is to be referred to *Christ*, and *God* to the *Father*; which latter, he thinks, Thomas spoke, after some interval of time had elapsed.

I pass over several passages, where our common text applies the name of God to Christ; *e. g.* Acts, xx. 28, and I Tim. iii. 16. In regard to this latter text, however, it appears to me a plain case, that the authorities which Griesbach himself has adduced, would fairly lead to a decision different from his own, respecting the genuineness of the reading, *Θεος*. I will not attempt to weigh them here; as I feel no desire to press into my service, witnesses of a character at all dubious. I admit the great desert of Griesbach, in his critical edition of the New Testament. I believe he was a man who would not willingly or consciously misrepresent either facts or arguments, for or against any reading. But the work which he undertook was too great to be accomplished by one person, or even by one whole generation of critics. Dr. Laurence, in his Essay upon the Classification of Manuscripts by Griesbach, has rendered it more than probable that Griesbach's account of facts is not unfrequently *very erroneous*, not

through design, but from human infirmity ; and that the principles by which he estimated the value of manuscripts, and, of course, the genuineness of particular readings, are fundamentally erroneous. And, since I am on this subject, I may take the liberty to state, what seems to be so little known among us, that Griesbach is not the only recent editor of a critical Testament, to which the great body of critics attach importance. The celebrated Matthäi, whom Middleton calls the best Greek scholar that ever edited a Greek Testament, published at Riga, (between A. D. 1782—1788), a critical Testament, of twelve volumes, which approaches much nearer to the *Textus Receptus* than the edition of Griesbach, with whom he is at variance. Eichhorn, (after giving a high character of this edition of Matthäi, and noticing that, in his maxims respecting the formation of the New Testament text, the editor differs very much from Griesbach and others), says, that “for a long time he had followed the middle path between the two parties.” [*Bibliothek. Band ii. St. 2. s. 411.*]

The whole system of classifying manuscripts, which lies at the very foundation of all Griesbach's decisions in regard to the text, is rejected by Matthäi as worthless ; and Dr. Laurence has, in the Essay above-mentioned, made an attack upon the same classification, which renders questionable the principles of it ; at least the application of those principles, as made by Griesbach.

Professor Knapp, of Halle, has also published a Greek Testament, the text of which is independent of Griesbach's, although it approximates to it. The edition is esteemed for its punctuation, order of words, accentuation, and spiri-  
tuation ; and has great currency.

I acknowledge this is digression. But it may be useful to those who are in the habit of attributing so much weight to Griesbach's decisions, to know that they are far from being uncontroverted by many of the best critics among his own countrymen. I know of no commentator of note who has made Griesbach's text his basis, except Paulus ; and he has reexamined all his decisions.

To return, however, to our subject. We do not want,



and feel no disposition to use, either of the texts referred to above as proof texts, in the question before us.

There is another class of texts which I have not hitherto mentioned, because the certainty of their meaning is commonly thought to be less capable of demonstration than that of others which I have produced. I refer to such texts as Ephes. v. 5, "The kingdom of Christ and God;" Titus, ii. 13, "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ;" 2 Tim. iv. 1, "I adjure you before God, even Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and kingdom;" 2 Pet. i. 1, . . . "of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The translation of these texts here proposed is altogether in conformity to the Greek idiom. Middleton (on the article) thinks it absolutely *essential* to it: For, although proper names and abstract nouns, in such a connexion as Θεός and Χριστός here, may take the article before the first noun, and omit it before the second, and yet designate *different things and persons*; yet, if words which are *attributives* omit the article in such a case, they exhibit evidence that they are to be connected with a preceding noun, and are the predicates of it, and not significant of something separate, *e. g.*, in the first case, Eph. v. 5, "the kingdom of Christ and God," according to this rule, would mean, *of Christ, who is God*; in the second instance, Tit. ii. 13, the meaning is, "of the great God, who is our Saviour," &c.

Mr. Wordsworth, a few years since, instituted a most laborious investigation of the Greek Fathers, to see whether the idiom which respects the article here was prevalent in their writings; and whether they ever understood more than *one person* to be designated by such expressions. The result I will give in his own words. (P. 132.)

"I have observed more, I am persuaded, than a thousand instances of the form, ὁ Χριστός καὶ Θεός (*Christ and God*) (Eph. v. 5); some hundreds of instances of ὁ μέγας Θεός καὶ σωτὴρ (*the great God and Saviour*) (Tit. ii. 13); and not fewer than several thousands, of the form ὁ Θεός καὶ σωτὴρ (*God and Saviour*) (2 Pet. i. 1); while in no single case have I seen, where the sense could be determined, any *one* of them used, *but only of one person*."

After all, if there were no other evidence of the divinity of Christ in the New Testament, than what depends solely on these texts, one might perhaps hesitate concerning the subject. But, when I consider that the method of translating here proposed, is perfectly conformable to the Greek idiom, and must be adopted in various other passages, (*e.g.* Rom. xv. 6; Eph. v. 20; James, i. 27)—and, if adopted in these, will give them a sense conformable to that of other parts of the sacred volume—I confess, the evidence which these passages afford, if not decisive, at least confirms in no small degree the testimony of other texts;—specially in this case, in regard to the text in Titus: for, where is the *appearing* of God the Father ever spoken of by the New Testament writers? It is *Christ* who *appeared* to execute vengeance upon the Jewish nation,—who will *appear* at the judgment. Yet here, the *appearance of the great God* is mentioned—of the *great God and Saviour*; for so I cannot but believe the text is fairly to be construed. Can this *great God* be any other than Christ himself?

Thus much for the texts which bestow on Christ the appellation of God, with adjuncts that show in what sense the word of God must be understood, according to the common rules of interpreting language. I must now,

II. *Examine another class, which attribute to Christ equality with God, or that power and dignity or honour which belong to God.*

I use the phrase *equality* with God, after the example of the Apostle, in the text to be immediately examined. I know, at the same time, it is a phrase that leads, if any are so disposed, to logomachy. What I mean by it is explained by the words which immediately follow it.

Phil. ii. 5—8. “Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who, being in the condition of God, did not regard his equality with God as an object of solicitous desire, but humbled himself, (assumed an inferior or humble station), taking the condition of a servant, being made after the similitude of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he exhibited his humility by obedience, even to the death of the cross.”

Such is the rendering which, after laborious examina-

tion, I am persuaded the Greek of this passage not only admits, but demands. I will state my reasons for dissenting from the common method in which either Trinitarians or Unitarians have translated it.

Our common version runs thus,—“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but humbled himself,” &c. This version seems to render nugatory, or at least irrelevant, a part of the Apostle’s reasoning in the passage. He is enforcing the principle of Christian humility upon the Philippians. In order to urge this in the most effectual manner, he proposes to them the example of Christ,—“Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ.” What was this?—It was manifested by the fact, that, though essentially divine (*ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ*), he did not eagerly retain his divine condition, but assumed the station or condition of a servant (*μορφῇ δούλου*). Here the relevancy of his reasoning is sufficiently plain. But, how was it any proof or example of humility, that *he did not think it robbery to be equal with God*?

Besides, the Greek will not fairly bear this construction. Ἄρπαγμος, translated *robbery*, does not seem here to signify *an act of robbery*, but *res rapta*, or rather, figuratively, *res avidè diripienda et vindicanda*,—i. e. something which is eagerly to be seized and appropriated. (See Schleusner and Storr, in locum.) Moreover, ἄρπαγμοις, which our translators have placed next to the verb ἡγήσατο, does not, by the rules of syntax, belong there. The Greek syntax would place the words thus, as to their sense,—ὅκ ἡγήσατο τοῦ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ [κατὰ] ἄρπαγμον, literally, “he regarded not the being equal to God (as) ἄρπαγμον, as a thing to be greedily sought or appropriated.”

For these reasons, I cannot believe that our common version gives the sense of the passage. And, for similar reasons, I feel compelled to reject the version so common among some Unitarians,—“He did not think of the robbery of being equal with God.” The objections to it are, that it translates ἄρπαγμον here, as designating the *action of robbery*; and that ὅκ ἡγήσατο τοῦ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἄρπαγμον can never be proved to mean, “He thought not of the robbery of being equal with God.” The verb ἡγήσατο is not susceptible of such a meaning as *thought not of*,—i. e. *did not*



aspire to, imagine, form expectations of, &c. In its primary sense, it signifies *to lead, to be preëminent, &c.*; in its secondary sense, *to esteem, judge, regard, repute, &c.* To render *οὐκ ἤγησάτο ἀεπαγμεν*, *he did not think of the robbery*, would, therefore, be violating the obvious principles of the Greek language. To justify in any measure such a version, the passage must run thus,—*ὁὐ ΤΟΝ ἀεπαγμεν ἤγησάτο ΤΟΥ εἶναι ἰσά Θεῷ*. Even then, *ἤγησάτο* could not be rendered *thought not of*. The word does not permit this sense. And, as no ancient manuscript or version has given a hint of such a form of the text, it seems to be placed beyond fair debate, that the translation now in question cannot be admitted.

Both our translators and Unitarians appear, generally, to have mistaken the import of the word *μορφῇ* (*condition, state*), in this passage. On the one hand, *μορφῇ* does not seem to me at all parallel with the *brightness* (*ἀπαυγασμα*) and *express image* (*χαρακτῆρ*), which are applied to the Son, in Heb. i. 3. These words designate the glory of the incarnate Messiah, who had appeared “in these last days,” and spoken to men. They express the same view of Christ which John gives, (i. 14), when he says, “We beheld his (Christ’s) glory,—verily, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father; and this glory was seen after the ‘Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.’” Comparison, then, of *μορφῇ Θεοῦ* with these passages, will not ascertain its meaning: for, to Christ belonged the *μορφῇ Θεοῦ*, (*the condition of God*), *before* he humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant. In occupying, indeed, the condition of a servant, (if I may so express the Greek *ἐκένωσι ἑαυτὸν*), consisted his humiliation.

A fair examination of *μορφῇ*, either generally or in special relation to the passage before us, will end, as I must believe, in the conviction that the word is not unfrequently synonymous with *φύσις* (*nature*) and *οὐσία* (*being*). The proofs which Schleusner has offered of this are sufficient. (Lex. in voc. *μορφῇ*.) But the proof of what it means in the passage before us, is too plain to be easily mistaken. If you say *μορφῇ Θεοῦ* means only a similitude or resemblance of God in *moral* qualities, as we speak of Christians resembling God, then I ask whether his humiliation con-

sisted in depressing, or subjecting to a lower state, the moral qualities which Christ possessed?

Does *μορφη Θεου* mean, then, a resemblance to God, in respect to *office*, as magistrates are called *gods*? But, on the supposition that Christ was only a *finite* being, what office did he lay aside in order to become incarnate? If Christ be only a created being, who were his subjects, and what was his dominion, before his mediatorial kingdom commenced by the event of his incarnation?

But this is not all. If *μορφη* mean only *similitude*, then what is the sense of the next clause, where Christ is said to have taken upon him the *μορphen δουλου*? That he bore merely a *resemblance* to a servant,—*i. e.* to one who obeys, or is in an humble station? or, that he did *actually* take the condition of one who was in an humble and depressed state, and persevere in it to the very death of the cross? The latter must be admitted, unless we hearken to the doctrine of the Docetæ, who taught that Christ was a man in *appearance* only, and not in reality. If *μορφη δουλου*, then, means the condition or state of one who is humbled or depressed, and subjected to the command of others, does not *μορφη Θεου* mean the state or condition of one who is truly divine?

After all, it should be sacredly remembered, that, on such a subject as this, human language, (made up of terms formed to express the ideas of finite and mutable beings about finite and mutable objects), is, of course, incompetent fully to designate the mode of union between the divine and human natures. I must regard the language here, and in all other passages on this awful subject, as only an *approximation* toward describing what exists in the Divinity, or is done by him—He who was in the condition of God, and equal with God, *i. e.* divine, *ἐκενώσε ἑαυτόν*, which means, as we translate it, “*exinanivit seipsum—made himself of no reputation.*” Yet, how incompetent must these translations be! So far as Christ is the immutable God, he cannot change—*i. e.* he cannot *divest himself* of his essential perfections. He cannot cease to be omnipotent, omniscient, &c. But he may veil the brightness of his glories for a time, by assuming to himself a union with the human nature, and making this the organ

through which he displays his perfections during the time of the incarnation. Does the sun cease to shine—are his beams extinguished, when an intervening cloud obscures for a while his lustre? Or, is the sun in any measure changed?

In reply to a multitude of questions with which you and others can press Trinitarians on this subject, we may ask, Because God is omnipotent, does it follow that the whole of that omnipotence must be every moment exerted? If not, (and who will refuse assent to this?), then, why may he not have veiled his glories for a time in the incarnate Saviour, and still retain all his essential perfections unchanged? Is it too much to say that he may have done so? I believe that the text in question decides that he *did*.

I approach such a subject, however, with solemn awe; and never feel my own weakness and ignorance more intensely than while endeavouring to think upon it. The familiar, I had almost said irreverential manner, in which some speak and write respecting this mystery, is calculated, I freely acknowledge, to excite painful emotions. On the one hand, it would seem, if we are to credit one mode of representation, that the greatest portion of Christ's humiliation consisted in his having renounced and absolutely laid aside his divinity during the time of the incarnation; and that, *as God*, in this diminished condition, he did actually expire upon the cross. All the powers of language are exhausted, in order to show how great must be the sufferings and condescension of Christ, in undergoing such a degradation as this. On the other hand, some who revolt from these mistaken representations, verge to the other extreme. Lest they should degrade the divine nature of Christ, they are so careful to separate the human nature from it, that one is compelled to suppose that the man Jesus had simply a higher degree of inspiration and communion with God than other prophets. The New Testament does not seem to me to justify either of these extremes.

A thousand questions may be raised here—a thousand difficulties suggested, which no reflecting man will undertake to answer. The history of past ages exhibits an appalling picture of disputes about the person of Christ—



all springing from the denial of *facts* revealed in the New Testament, or from the unhallowed curiosity of men who desired to know what God has not revealed. The very last age witnessed a dispute in Germany, between the theologians of Giessen and Tübingen, whether the humiliation (κενωση) of Christ consisted "in abstinence from both the direct and reflex use of divine majesty," or in the "occultation of divine majesty;"—a dispute which agitated the Lutheran Church to the very centre.

The humble inquirer after truth, who once is brought clearly to see the boundaries of human knowledge, will shrink from disputations of such a nature, and pour forth his earnest supplications to God, that the simple verities which the Scriptures reveal may be believed on the authority of God; while the *manner* in which the facts revealed for our credence exist, is left with Him, "whose ways are unsearchable, and whose judgments are past finding out."

I have used the freedom of letter-writing in this discussion; I can hardly call it digression, as it is so nearly connected with the explanation of the text which I am examining. Will you now permit me to repeat, that the version which would correspond best with the real meaning of the passage in question, must express the following ideas? "Who, being of divine nature or condition, did not eagerly seek to retain his equality with God, but took on himself an humble condition," &c. In this way, and in this only, does the passage appear to be consistent with the Apostle's argument and design, at least appropriate to them; and in this way only can the Greek be fairly and grammatically rendered.

With the passage that has now been considered, seem to me to agree, in general import, several others:—John, v. 19, "Whatsoever things he (the Father) doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise;" *i. e.* he has the same power as the Father. And when it is said in the context, "The Son doeth nothing by (or of *ἀπο ἑφ'*) himself, except he see the Father do it," I understand the meaning to be, that the Jews had no reason to believe that Christ had any disposition to blaspheme God, (of which they had so frequently accused him), for he acted in entire concert with

the divine purposes and commands, and had no separate interests of his own.

John, v. 21—23. “For as the Father raiseth the dead and restoreth them to life, so also the Son restoreth to life whom he pleases. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.”

Is there not here an equality of power and honour ascribed to the Father and the Son? The Son is, indeed, introduced as “head over all things;” but, could he be such a head, could “*all* judgment be committed to him,” if at the same time he was not also divine, and consequently omniscient? It is perfectly plain, that, in so far as the “committing of judgment to the Son” is concerned, it must be to the mediatorial person—to one who, in respect to office, is subordinate to God. But, in so far as *qualifications* requisite to perform the duties which that *commitment* requires are concerned, the Saviour is divine; and the honour to be claimed by him is the same with that which the Divinity himself claims. It matters not whether you interpret this of obedience to be rendered to the Son, or of homage to be paid to him. Multitudes of prophets, as commissioned by God, have borne his messages of mercy and of judgment to his people; but to whom, among them all, did he grant the privilege of being honoured as himself? Or, to what created being shall the glory of the blessed God be rendered, without infringing upon the fundamental principles of both the Jewish and the Christian religion?

In fact, I cannot well conceive how our Saviour could have used the words above quoted, without having exposed himself to renewed and just accusations of the Jews for blaspheming, unless he were really divine. The Jews had accused him of violating the Sabbath, because he had on that day healed the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. The reply of Christ to them was, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;” which, if I understand the argument, must mean, My Father has never ceased to work on the Sabbath, in carrying on all the operations of the natural and moral world; he supersedes the law of the Sabbath: I have the same right. “The Son of man

is Lord of the Sabbath." The Jews then sought to slay him, because, as they affirmed, "he had violated the Sabbath, and said that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God.*" In reply to their bitter accusations, Jesus made use of the language above cited,—telling them that he did whatever the Father did, and was entitled to the same honour. Was this relinquishing his claim to the equality with God which the Jews had charged him with assuming? Or, was it speaking out plainly that he wrought on the Sabbath by the same right that the Father did, and was entitled to the same deference? Can his words, interpreted without regard to any preconceived theory, be made to signify less than this?

You will expect me, perhaps, to adduce John x. 30, "I and my Father are one." It is a clear case that the Jews here seem to have understood Christ as claiming equality with God, or rather claiming to be God. (See verse 33.) But I am not satisfied that the manner in which they often expounded his words is a sure guide for our interpretation of them at the present time. The malignant disposition which they frequently displayed may well lead us to suspect that they would, if possible, put such a construction on his words as would subject him to the imputation of blasphemy or rebellion against the Roman Government. I would expound the words of Christ, therefore, independently of any construction which his embittered enemies put upon them. And, in the present case, it seems to me that the meaning of "I and my Father are one," is simply, "I and my Father are united in counsel, design, and power."

So, in John xvii. 20, 21, Christ prays that "all who shall believe on him *may be one.* As thou, Father," continued he, "art in me, and I in thee; so they also *may be one* in us,"—*i. e.* that the disciples may have the "same mind which was in Christ Jesus,"—may copy after his example, and be united in the temper of their souls to him, as he is to God,—*may be one* with the Father and with him."

So also, in Gal. iii. 28, Christians of different ranks and nations are said to *be one* in Christ; and I Cor. iii. 8, he that planteth and he that watereth *are one*,—*i. e.* they have



the same affections and designs—they are united to accomplish the same object. In the same manner, Cicero says, “*Unus fiat e pluribus,*” *many constitute one*, when persons are united in temper and pursuits. (De Offic. l. i. c. 17.)

From the consideration of those texts which ascribe in a general sense equality with God, or divine power and honours to Christ,—let us now turn

III. *To the examination of those which assert or imply that particular divine attributes, or works, belong to him.*

1. *Omniscience is ascribed to Christ.*

Matt. xi. 27. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

If in this passage the same *omniscience* be not ascribed to the Son as to the Father, I am unable to make out satisfactorily what the meaning of it is. In the latter clause of the verse, men are declared to be entirely dependent on the Son for that knowledge of the Father which is revealed,—*i. e.* he only makes this revelation. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten, who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, *he hath revealed him.*” John i. 18. At the same time, I concede, it is *possible*, that the knowledge here spoken of may be merely that which is intended to be revealed in the gospel.

John vi. 46. “Because that no man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.” The word *ἵδω* here does not mean *to see with bodily eyes*, but *with the mental eye*,—*i. e.* to know. What but omniscience could be adequate to the knowledge here predicated of Christ? And is it a satisfactory explanation of the text to say that the knowledge here meant is simply that which is conveyed in the instructions of the gospel?

In the same manner, the knowledge of the most intimate secrets of the human heart is ascribed to Christ. John ii. 24, 25. “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.” John vi. 64,—“But there are some of you that believe

not. For Jesus knew who they were that believed not, and who should betray him."

Acts i. 24. "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." That *Lord* (Κυριος) here means *Christ*, seems to me very plain from verses 21 and 22 (compare verse 6) of the context. Besides, this is the *common* appellation of the Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles. The appeal made in this case respects the *choice of an Apostle*. "Show, Lord," say the Apostles, "which of these two THOU hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and *apostleship*." Is there any room to doubt here, that the Apostles did appeal to the same Lord who had chosen them, to designate who should fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas?

1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." That Lord (Κυριος) here means Christ is plain, both from the office of judging ascribed to him, and from his *coming* to judgment. Without citing numerous other passages, which confessedly represent Christ as the final Judge of all the human race, permit me here to ask, Is it possible for any being who is not *omniscient* to judge the universe of intelligent creatures? Can he for thousands of years (possibly of ages) be present everywhere, and know what is transacted; can he penetrate the recesses of the human heart; can he remember the whole character and actions of countless myriads, so diverse in talents, temper, circumstances, and situation; and yet be finite—be neither *omnipresent* nor *omniscient*? God claims it as his distinguishing and peculiar prerogative, that he knows the secrets of the human heart, Jer. xvii. 10. What then must he be who knows the secrets of all hearts, at all times, and in all worlds? If he be not God, the proof that the Father is God is defective too; and we have the question again to dispute with the Manicheans, whether Jehovah be not a limited and imperfect being.

"But," you will say, "Christ acts as Judge by delegated authority: Why not, then, by knowledge imparted to him?" He does indeed *act* as Judge by delegated authority, because it is in his mediatorial capacity that he acts as Judge; but to *act* as Judge is one thing,—to be *qualified* for such an office is another. Exaltation as Mediator constitutes him Judge in that capacity; *omnipresence* and *omniscience only* can qualify him for the duties of that station. And can *omniscience* be imparted? We may as well say *omnipotence* or *self-existence* can be imparted. There is, and there can be, but *one* God; and a second omniscient being (omniscient simply by knowledge imparted), would force us into all the absurdities of polytheism.

Rev. ii. 23. "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." The same person speaks here who "was dead and is alive," *i. e.* Christ (chap. i. 18). The sense of the passage is too plain to need any comment.

To conclude this head: When I compare such passages as those above cited, with the description of divine omniscience, how can I doubt that the New Testament writers mean to ascribe the *knowledge of all things* to Christ? To say that whatsoever pertains to God or man is known by any being, is to predicate omniscience of that being. Compare now with this the knowledge which God ascribes to himself only, in Jer. xvii. 9, 10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

2. *Divine power is ascribed to Christ.*

Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Compare now this passage, 1 Cor. xv. 26—28, where the same language is applied to God the Father. And if "to subdue all things to himself," (*ὑποτάξει τα πάντα ἑαυτῷ*) be not characteristic of omnipotence, in Phil. iii. 21, when



applied to Christ, why should it be when applied, in verse 28, to the Father ?

Heb. i. 3. "Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The word *φειραν*, which is translated *upholding*, means *preserving, directing, governing*. Thus Chrysostom,—*φειραν*, says he *κυβερναν, διαπιπτοντα συγκρατει*,—i. e. *governing, preserving things perishable*. So the corresponding Hebrew word, in Is. xlv. 3, lxiii. 9.

In John x. 18, Christ says, "he has power to lay down his life, and to resume it again." In other places, the resurrection of Jesus is ascribed to God,—Acts ii. 24, 32; iii. 15.; v. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 14; xv. 15.

In 2 Pet. i. 3, *divine power* (*θεια δυναμις*) is ascribed to Christ; compare verse 16.

Most decisive, however, of divine power belonging to Christ, are those passages above, which ascribe to him the creation of the universe. This is the distinguishing characteristic of Jehovah. Jer. x. 10—16, "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King. At his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Every man is brutish in his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. *The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The Lord of Hosts is his name.*"

Acts xiv. 15. "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also

are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the *living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.*"

When I read such passages, and compare them with the creative power ascribed to Christ, I cannot but admit, with the Apostle, "that he who *built* all things is *God.*"

### 3. ETERNITY is ascribed to Christ.

That those passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ's existence before the creation of the world, do not explicitly assert his eternity, I have already suggested. But then it is difficult to conceive that they do not *imply* eternity. "For," says Doederlein (Inst. Theol. i. p. 390), "to exist before the beginning of the world, what can it mean but to exist from eternity?" Passages of this nature are the following, viz. :—John i. 1, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;*" 1 John i. 2, "For the Life was manifested; and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that *eternal Life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;" John xvii. 5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee *before the world was;*" John xvii. 24, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me *before the foundation of the world.*"

But specially do I apprehend that Rev. xxii. 13, is decisive on this subject,—"*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.*" That it is Christ who here speaks, is clear; for, 1. In the preceding verse he says, "*Behold I come quickly.*" 2. In the 16th verse, the same person says, "*I Jesus have sent mine angel,*" &c. Now, the same description that is here applied to Christ is given of the eternity of God, in chap. xxi. 5, 6; compare verses 7th and 3d. To know still more fully what this form of expression means, we must recur to the Old Testament, where we find it divested of its peculiar shape. In Is. xlv. 6, Jehovah says, "*I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God,*"—*i. e.* eternity distinguishes me from all that are falsely called

gods. So in Is. xlviii. 12, after declaring that he will not suffer his name to be polluted, nor give his glory to another, he adds, "I am he (*i. e.* the true God)—I am the first, and I also am the last."

Now, if the same things be asserted of Christ (as plainly they are in the texts under consideration), how can we avoid the conclusion, that the holy Apostle meant to assert his eternal existence?

4. *Divine honours and worship are ascribed to Christ.*

John v. 23, "That all men might honour the Son even as they honour the Father." On this text I have before remarked (page 92), in another connexion.

Heb. i. 6, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

The word *worship*, it is said, has two significations, *viz.* *obeisance* and *spiritual homage*. This is true; and the first of these meanings often presents itself in the Old Testament, and (as I am willing to concede) in the Gospels. Many who worshipped Christ, while he sojourned among men—*i. e.* prostrated themselves before him—probably knew or acknowledged nothing of his divine nature. But what shall we say of the *angels*? Are *they* ignorant of his true nature? And is not the worship which they who are pure spirits pay of course *spiritual*, and not simple obeisance?

Phil. ii. 10, 11, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"Things in heaven, earth, and under the earth," is a common periphrasis of the Hebrew and New Testament writers, for the *universe* (*το παν*, or *τα παντα*). What can be meant by things in heaven,—*i. e.* beings in heaven, bowing the knee to Jesus, if spiritual worship be not meant?

What other worship can heaven render? And if the worship of Christ in heaven be spiritual, should not that of others, who ought to be in temper united with them, be spiritual also? And when it is added, this worship shall be "to the glory of God the Father," I understand the sentiment to be, that Jesus, in his mediatorial character, is



the proper object of universal adoration ; but as this character has a peculiar connexion with, and relation to, God the Father,—so the worship paid to Christ the Mediator should redound to the glory of the Father, as well as of himself.

Rom. x. 9—14, “ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek ; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him on whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? ”

The Lord, *on whose name they are to call*, is plainly Christ ; for he is the same in whom *they are to believe* (verses 11 and 14). And this Lord (Christ) on whom they are to call, and in whom they are to believe, is *Κυριος παντων*, *universal Lord*, and therefore able to bestow the blessings which they need.

Rev. v. 8—14, “ And when he (*i. e.* Christ, see v. 6, 7) took the book, the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders : And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,—saying, with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* And every creature which is in heaven,

and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen ! And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

If this be not *spiritual* worship, and if Christ be not the object of it here, I am unable to produce a case where worship can be called spiritual and divine.

*The Apostles and primitive martyrs worshipped Christ ;* and they recognize the practice of worshipping him among other Christians.

Acts vii. 59, 60, " And they stoned Stephen, making invocation (*ἐπικαλούμενοι*) and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And, when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Now, here is a dying martyr, who is expressly said to " be filled with the Holy Ghost," and to enjoy the vision of the heavenly world, and of the Saviour who was there—in his last moments too—on the very verge of eternity—here is such a martyr committing his departing spirit into the hands of the Lord Jesus, in the very same language, and with the same confidence, with which Jesus, when expiring upon the cross, committed his spirit into the hands of the Father. This expiring disciple also implores forgiveness for his murderers. Of whom does he implore it ? Of the same Lord Jesus. Can a departing spirit be intrusted to any being, and the forgiveness of sin be expected of him, who has not omnipotence and supreme authority ? And can a dying martyr, with his eyes fixed on the very vision of God, and his soul filled with the Holy Ghost, ask and pray amiss ?

2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, " For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The *Lord*, whom Paul here *besought*, is plainly Christ ; for this same Lord, in answer to the Apostle's supplica-

tion, says, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength (*ἡ δύναμις μου*) is perfected in weakness." Then the Apostle immediately subjoins, "Most gladly then would I rejoice in my infirmities, that the *strength of CHRIST* (*ἡ δύναμις Χριστοῦ*) may rest upon me." A clearer case that Christ was the object of the Apostle's repeated prayer cannot well be presented.

1 Thes. iii. 11, 12, "Now, God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you."

Can any distinction be here made between the rank of those who are addressed by the Apostle? And does not the 12th verse plainly shew that the supplication of the Apostle is specially directed to the Lord, *i. e.* Christ?

2 Thes. ii. 16, 17, "Now, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work."

Here the order of the persons to whom supplication is made is the reverse of that in the last instance quoted: which shows that nothing depends on the *order*, but that it was a matter of indifference with the Apostle which was placed first,—the supplication being equally addressed to the Father and to Christ.

Rom. i. 7, "To all that be in Rome beloved of God—called to be saints—grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Here the same blessings are solicited and expected from Christ and the Father. (See the same formula repeated, 1 Cor. i. 3.; 2 Cor. i. 2.)

Acts i. 24, "And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen."

That *Lord* here means the Lord Jesus, seems evident from verses 21 and 22. It is the usual appellation, moreover, which the Book of Acts gives to the Saviour. (See above, p. 92.)

2 Tim. iv. 14, "The Lord reward him according to his



works!" Again, verses 17 and 18, "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen!" (Compare iii. 11.) Usage hardly admits a doubt here that *Lord* means Christ.

Nor can I separate from religious invocation, trust, and confidence, such expressions as these (Acts iii. 6), "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Nor can I see how the solemn adjuration by Christ (*ἐν Χριστῷ*) which the Apostle uses, Rom. ix. 1. 1 Tim. ii. 7, can be separated from religious invocation or appeal.

We must add to all these instances of worship the fact, that Christians were so habituated to address their supplications to Christ, that "they who invoke Christ" became, it would seem, a kind of proper name by which they were, in primitive times, designated as Christians.

Thus Paul (1 Cor. i. 2) addresses himself to all *who invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, IN EVERY PLACE*. That the verb *ἐπικαλεῖω* is an appropriate one to designate the act of prayer, will not be questioned. The literal translation of it is *to invoke*. The simple meaning of the passage is, "I address myself to all Christians." But, instead of using the name Christians directly, the Apostle uses a periphrasis, and says, *to all the invokers of Christ*, i. e. to those who pray to him, meaning the same as *ἁγίοις, κλητοῖς*, &c. in the context. He has signified, too, that the practice of *invoking Christ* was not confined to Corinth. He addresses "those who pray to Christ in every place" (*ἐν παντί τόπῳ*).

Exactly in the same manner does Ananias describe Christians, when the Lord Jesus bade him go to instruct and comfort Saul. Acts ix. 13, 14, "Lord," said he, "I have heard of many concerning this man, what things he has done (*τοῖς ἁγίοις σου*) to thy saints at Jerusalem; and even now he has a commission from the high priest to bind all (*τοὺς*

ἐπικαλοῦμεν τὸ ὄνομα σου) those who invoke thy name,—*i. e.* Christians. See the same thing repeated, verse 21st.

The very Heathen, in the primitive age of Christianity, little as they knew about Christians, discovered that they made Christ an object of worship. Says Pliny, in writing to Trajan,\* (Lib. x. Ep. 97.) "They (Christians) sing in social worship a hymn to Christ as a God."

Eusebius too (Ecc. Hist. v. 28), in writing against the Artemonites, appeals to the ancient songs of Christians, thus,—“Whatever psalms and hymns were composed by faithful brethren, from the beginning, *praise Christ the Word of God.*” Can any example of a Church in the Apostolic age who did not practise this be produced?

Did not the Saviour give his disciples a general precept and encouragement, to make him the object of prayer? “If ye shall ask any thing in my name,”—*i. e.* as my disciples, on my account, said he to the Apostles, “I will accomplish it” (*ἐγὼ ποιήσω*). John xiv. 13, 14. They appear to me to have understood this, as directing that he should be regarded by them as the special object of prayer. Hence, instead of finding few or no examples of prayer to Christ, in the history of the primitive Christians, as exhibited in the New Testament, I find more of this nature than of any other.

When I have contemplated the precepts which encourage prayer to Christ, and the worship of him, both by the inhabitants of the heavenly world, and by the churches on earth, I then compare these things with the exclusive worship and trust which Jehovah claims to himself. Is. xlv. 22, 23, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” Is. xlii. 8, “I am the Lord; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” Jer. xvii. 5—7, “Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be

\* *Carmen Christo, quasi Deo, soliti essent (i. e. Christiani), dicere secum invicem.*

like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh ; but shall inhabit parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Matth. iv. 10, " Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and HIM ONLY shalt thou serve."

I am ready now to ask, whether I can avoid coming to the conclusion, either that Christ is truly divine, inasmuch as he is so often represented as the object of worship ; or that the sacred writers have mistaken this great point, and led us to that which may be considered as idolatry. And yet the worship of Christ is placed, as it would seem, in opposition to that of idols. 1 Cor. viii. 4—6. That Christianity utterly and for ever renounces all idolatry—all polytheism—in a word, every thing inconsistent with the worship of one only living and true God—is a point so plain and so universally conceded, that I shall not dwell for a moment upon it.

Were it not that I fear becoming tedious, by detailing my reasons for believing in the divine nature of Christ, I should add a great number of texts, which require us with all the heart to *love* him, to *obey* him, to *confide* in him, and to *commit ourselves* to him, in such a manner as I can never persuade myself to do with respect to any being who is not God. The New Testament tells me that my consolation, my privilege, my happiness, must be derived from *trusting in Christ*. But can I trust myself to a *finite* being, when I have an *infinite, almighty, all-sufficient* GOD to whom I may go ? Shall I be satisfied with a mite, when I can have the mines of Peru ?

I should also add those texts, some of which are very striking ones, where, in the New Testament, the very same things are applied to Christ, which, in the Old Testament, are affirmed of Jehovah. Some of these follow :—

Is. vi. 5—10. Then said I, Woe is me ! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live

John xii. 37—41. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him ; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake ; Lord, who hath believed



coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo ! this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Mal. iii. 1. Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me ; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in ; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Ps. lxxviii. 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the *most high God*, and kept not his testimonies.

our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of HIM.

Mark i. 2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

1 Cor. x. 9. Neither let us tempt *Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

It were easy to increase the number of such passages as these ; but I shall desist. Instead of that want of evidence in the New Testament, with respect to the divinity of Christ, of which you repeatedly speak, and in strong terms, I find evidence almost everywhere to illustrate and confirm the doctrine in question.

Thus have I endeavoured to show that the New Testament bestows upon Christ the appellation of God, accompanied by such adjuncts as naturally, not to say necessarily, lead us to understand this word in its highest sense—that it attributes to him equality with God—that it represents him as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe ; declares his omniscience, his omnipotence, and his eternity ; and, both by precepts and examples, exhibits Christ as the object of prayer and divine worship,

by the church in heaven and on earth. To these conclusions do the plain rules of exegesis necessarily conduct me. I am sensible that allegations are frequently made, that we receive our systems of belief from the creeds and confessions of faith, which have descended from former unenlightened and superstitious or philosophizing ages. That some of our *phraseology* has been derived from men who *sometimes* speculated too boldly, and substituted names for ideas, I am ready to concede. I feel the embarrassments that, on account of this, are occasionally thrown in the way of inculcating truth at the present time. Men are very apt to suppose that, if you throw away the old *terms* or *names*, you reject the old ideas also. Yet it can be only superficial thinkers who will soberly believe this. It is in general, therefore, a sufficient reason with me for dismissing phraseology, when it must, almost of necessity, be misunderstood by the great body of men. Yet a sudden and entire revolution in the common technical terms of theology, would be very undesirable; because such a revolution must again lead, at first, to other misapprehensions. I am willing, therefore, to retain many terms, which have become venerable for their antiquity, that I should reject without hesitation, if they were now presented *de novo*.

I am not conscious of being led to the adoption of Trinitarian views, or to the ascription of true and proper divinity to Christ, by any creed or any human authority on earth. Unless I am quite ignorant of myself, the only influence which creeds and confessions exercise over me is to modify my *phraseology*. I take the language of theology as I find it; and do not venture upon the composition of a new nomenclature.

My sole business, these ten years past, has been the study of the Bible; and the study of it, in the daily use of those principles of exegesis, which you have, for the most part, so briefly and so happily described. I began this study, as I believed, with a desire to know what the Bible has taught. I have pursued it with increased desire, with unabated ardour. I have limited my studies to no one class of writers; but have solicitously endeavoured to seek for truth, and to receive it thankfully, from what-

ever quarter it might come. In particular, at least three quarters of my time have been spent among writers of the Unitarian class, from whom I have received, with gratitude, much instruction relative to the philology, the exegesis, and the literary history of the Scriptures. I am accustomed to reject any explanation of the Scriptures that is not founded upon the general principles of exegesis which you have developed. Whether an *orthodox* or *heterodox* use can be made of any interpretation, is what I habitually endeavour to lay out of view when I interpret the Scriptures. The simple question which I desire to place before me is, "What has God said? What has Christ taught?" I aim at being guided by the fundamental principles of explanation in all writings, when I pursue these inquiries in the Scriptures. And when I come to a satisfactory answer, I regard this as of divine authority—as *real orthodoxy*, in the highest and best sense of the word.

I do not, indeed, regard the opinions of great and good men, in past ages, as unworthy of attention, and even of reverence. If I read them with a proper temper of mind, there are few of them who may not be read with profit. The reasonings of Athanasius and Augustine I can peruse with pleasure; so I can those of Calvin and Edwards. But I adopt no opinion because they adopted it. The *reasons* of their opinion are the object of my investigation. It is of but little interest to me to know simply that they believed this or that doctrine. And with the very same object, I read the *opponents* of these great men. I can say with truth, that much more of my reading life has been spent among the opponents of my sentiments, than among the friends of them. Can you make the same affirmation?

After all, it is a principle by which, if I have any knowledge of my own heart, I desire for ever to be guided, to "call no man master on earth." I would place the decision of Scripture, fairly made out, IMMEASURABLY ABOVE all human opinions. I regard the one as the decision of an *unerring* God, the other as the opinions of *fallible* men.

It is with such views and principles of reasoning that I have come to the conclusions which have been developed in these Letters.



And now, in concluding this Letter, permit me to say that as reason does not and cannot decide against the doctrine of the Trinity, as explained in my second Letter, nor against the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, the question whether these are truths or not, rests solely on the decision of revelation. What then is that decision? This question I have endeavoured to answer.

I will now acknowledge that I was induced to undertake the above examination, in consequence of the challenge which you make (p. 9) in the following words,—“We challenge our opponents to adduce *one* passage in the New Testament, where the word *God*,.....unless turned from its usual sense by the connexion, does not mean the Father.” I have accepted this challenge, not, I hope, in the spirit of contest, but with the desire of contributing, so far as lies in my power, to develope what the New Testament does teach. I have laboured to show, that the very reason, above all other reasons, why I believe Christ to be truly divine, is *because the connexion, when he is called God, ascribes to him such attributes and works as leave me no room to doubt that the New Testament writers meant to assert his proper divinity.*

After stating your apprehensions in regard to the doctrine that Christ has two natures, the belief of which, you affirm, is “an enormous tax on human credulity,” you say (p. 14), “I am aware that these remarks will be met by two or three texts, in which Christ is called God, and by a class of passages not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him.” Whether the number of texts, in which Christ is called God, amounts to no more than *two or three*, it would be superfluous now to inquire, when they lie before us, and can easily be counted. We can also judge whether the “class of passages” is “not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him,” with equal facility. It is too late, however, for you and me to rest our faith upon the *number* of passages that inculcate a doctrine. We have conceded the Bible to be of divine authority. The simple question is, what, according to the rules of interpretation in all other cases, does any passage mean? This being ascertained, only two courses are before us,—the

*one*, to receive its meaning as the guide of our faith ; the *other*, to reject its authority, and deny our obligation to believe the decisions of the Scripture. If the New Testament does teach that Christ is not really divine, but a finite creature, and this can be made out by an unbiassed interpretation of it, I will either receive this doctrine—receive it implicitly (for, if I am not deceived in respect to myself, I only desire to know what God has taught, in order to believe it)—or else I will reject all claims to inspiration in the sacred writers, and follow their instructions only so far as they coincide with my own speculations. I am fully satisfied that there is no middle part here ; and that a man who investigates for himself, extensively and independently, must eventually follow one or the other of these courses.

Convince me, then, that you apply the principles of interpretation which you have laid down in an unbiassed manner, and that the New Testament does, according to them, clearly teach that Jesus is not, and cannot be, divine, and you will make me a convert to the doctrines (at least some of them) which you embrace. Where the Apostles lead me, I will go, or else renounce all deference to them. While I have a being also, I will cherish a grateful remembrance of any man who shall convince me, by sound reasoning, that I am in an error, and am wandering from the paths of life.

But you will allow me to say, what you will doubtless affirm of yourself, “ I cannot be convinced, until I am satisfied that my principles of interpretation are wrong, and my application of them erroneous.” You have described (p. 14) in what manner you avoid the conclusion drawn from those texts which call Christ *God*, and which apparently ascribe divine attributes to him. On the principles of exegesis there disclosed, I shall remark in another Letter. I will at present say only, that they appear to me far from being well established.

Your candour will easily concede, that the positions which I have just laid down are correct, and are such as become every sincere lover of truth. I am very ready to grant that we ought not to expect to convince you and your friends, by using reproachful epithets, or severe ap-

pellations. We cannot convince you, by appealing to our New England Fathers, or their creeds—to the ancient Fathers of the Church, or any body of men whatever. You may always reply to us, “Are not men fallible? and have not the best of uninspired men cherished some errors? Give us the *reasons* why our Fathers received the doctrines in question, and then we will hear you. The fact that they did receive them is a part of Church history, but certainly no theological argument. The Papal hierarchy is supported by the Fathers; and there never has been a sect in Christendom who could not, sooner or later, make an appeal to the Fathers whom they respected.”

Nor can we convince you, by a tenacious and unreasonable opposition to all critical examination of the New Testament, or by throwing out hints in our sermons or writings, that critical studies belong only to those who have a wish to be heretical or sceptical, or by a forced and mystical explanation of various passages of Scripture, and converting them to the support of sentiments which they never were designed to support. The sound rules of interpretation will soon sweep away every vestige of such defective opinions about the Word of God; and orthodoxy must stand or fall by the simple decision of the Scriptures, interpreted according to the general laws of language.

On the other hand, you will as cheerfully concede, too, that we cannot be convinced by calling us hard names—by misrepresenting our sentiments—by proving that Calvin helped to burn Servetus—by affirming that our sentiments come from creeds and confessions of human authority, fabricated by superstition and philosophy—by representing us as gloomy, superstitious, malignant, and unsocial—by appropriating to Unitarians all that is kind and noble, and generous and exalted, and leaving to us the opposites of these virtues—by affirming that we are desirous of infringing Christian liberty, and establishing an inquisition to defend our sentiments, and exhorting others to resist such tyranny—or by representing us as admitting in words that God is kind and paternal, while we think meanly of him, and treat him as the Heathen did their Jupiter. Such things may add fuel to the fire of controversy; but can the lover of truth and the Word of God



be convinced by them? They are the arts indeed of controversialists—and arts like them, I am sorry to say, are not confined to any one party. Passion has more control over disputants than they are aware of. Zeal for what they believe to be truth is what they think inspires them; while, perhaps, their words or the spirit of their representations “breathe out threatenings,” if not “slaughter,” to their opponents. I hardly dare trust myself to write this paragraph, lest I should catch the spirit while I am describing it. I know, in some measure, how frail I am; but I think I do sincerely disapprove of such a spirit, in whatever party it may be found.

In consulting writers of different views and sentiments, one is grieved to find how much of this spirit is indulged. I have seen it even in many great and good men. Possessed of feelings naturally ardent, I feel that there is reason to tremble for myself, lest I may, in some respect or other, transgress the laws of Christian propriety in these Letters, and hinder something of the conviction, in the minds of some, which they might possibly produce.

In one thing we shall certainly be agreed: The sober inquirer after truth must be convinced by reason and argument. All else is nothing to him. And where these lead him, he will go. The path of truth is the path of duty. The approbation of God for a sincere, candid, honest, believing heart, is worth infinitely more than all the honour which party-zeal can bestow, or the world is able to give.

## LETTER IV.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

IN my last Letter I endeavoured to offer reasons why I believe that Christ is *truly divine*. You will very naturally expect me to take some notice of those texts on which you would specially rely, to prove his inferiority to the Father. This I must do ; but in as summary a manner as possible. Not because it would not be easy to say much, even more easy than to write briefly, and yet with perspicuity ; but because there would be danger of protracting the subject, and tiring the patience of both writer and reader.

Let me begin, then, by stating certain things which are intimately connected with the subject in question. While I believe that Christ is truly divine, I believe that he is as truly human—that he was a real man, and lived, acted, suffered, and died as a man. He resembled, however, man in his primitive state, *i. e.* Adam, as he came out of the hands of his Maker. He was pure and sinless ; but he possessed all the feelings and all the innocent infirmities of human nature. I know no proposition that can be proved from the New Testament, if this cannot ; nor do I know of an opinion more inconsistent with the whole history of Jesus than that of the Docetæ, who averred that Christ was a man in appearance merely, and not in reality.

I regret that I am not able to find in your sermon an intimation that Christ was truly and properly a man. All that you appear to maintain is, that he was a being distinct from the Father, and inferior to him. Perhaps I must retract, therefore, my sentence against the Docetæ, lest I should seem to have treated your opinion with severity. But the state of my mind, in regard to the weight of evidence, I cannot retract. If the evidence be not overwhelming that Christ was perfectly a man, I cannot conceive it possible that any point in theology or morals is

capable of being established by the language of the New Testament.

The *Gnostics* maintained, that from the Supreme Divinity proceeded certain Eons, who were a kind of *lesser gods* (*dii minores*), and one of which (Christ) created the world. This Eon descended upon Jesus at his baptism, and forsook him at his crucifixion. In what important respect that opinion differs from this, which holds that Christ had a super-angelic soul united to a human body, I confess I cannot see. The Socinian theory seems to me incomparably more rational and more tenable than any shade of the Arian hypothesis. If the evidence be not complete that Christ was really a man from his birth, actions, sufferings, death, and affirmations respecting himself, then how is it to be proved that Christ ever existed at all? And will any one refuse his assent to the proposition that Christ possessed a divine nature, because he cannot see *how* a union of the divine and human natures could take place, and yet believe that *a human body was united to a soul not human*? To what order or class of beings, then, does this new compound and strangely-mixed person belong? He is not divine—he is not human, for a human soul is surely *essential* to human nature—nor is he angelic, for angels have no corporeal forms. Are we to be freed from *mystery*, then, by such a theory? It seems to me if there be mystery in any theory which has ever been proposed, respecting the person of Christ, it may surely be found here. I will not say (as you do, about the twofold nature of Christ, in which we believe) that “it is an enormous tax upon human credulity;” but I can say, that it appears to me as much like such a tax as any theory with which the Church has hitherto been agitated. I can never bring myself to view it as probable, in any degree, unless I find it in the Scriptures. But there I find that the *Lagos*, who existed before the world was made, was *God*—that *God who created the universe*. I cannot, then, admit him to be a super-angelic being simply, until I am convinced either that John was mistaken, or that his language has a different meaning from that which it appears to have.

As to the theory which maintains that Christ was God's



*own proper* Son, before the creation of the world (of course before his incarnation), and God's own Son in the same sense, or in as real and proper a sense, as Solomon was the son of David, it is natural to ask, first, Who, then, was his *Mother*? and, secondly, How much does such a theory of Divinities in the Christian system differ from that which admitted a Jupiter and his progeny to be gods, among the Greeks and Romans?

We do then (if you will allow me to use your own expressive words, though applied by you in a connexion somewhat different), "we do maintain that the human properties and circumstances of Christ, his birth, sufferings, and death—his praying to God, his ascribing to God all his power and offices—the acknowledged properties of Christ, we say, *oblige* us to interpret" them of *human nature*; and to draw the conclusion, that, whatever could be predicated of a real man, pious and sinless, might be predicated of him. How would he—how *could* he—have assumed our nature (except, as the Docetæ affirmed that he did, viz. in *appearance* only), unless every thing could be predicated of him which properly belongs to man? Accordingly, we know that he increased in wisdom, stature, and favour with God and man—that he ate, drank, slept, laboured,—was fatigued, hungry, thirsty—rejoiced and sympathized with his brethren, wept, was in an agony—prayed, bled, died, was buried, and rose again. If these things do not for ever exclude all hope of making any shade of the Arian theory probable, I must confess myself a stranger to the nature of evidence, and to what the New Testament contains.

To return to my purpose. The proper humanity of Christ being considered as an established fact, I have one general observation to make on the principles of exegesis which are connected with it.

It is this: That in as much as Christ has truly a human nature, every thing said of him in respect to this nature must necessarily be spoken of him in a capacity in which he is inferior to the Father. In a word, as his human nature is inferior to the divine, so, whatever has relation to it, or is predicated of it, must, of course, be that which implies inferiority to the divine.

Do you ask me how you shall distinguish when a text speaks of Christ in respect to his human nature, or in respect to his divine nature? I answer, just as, when you speak of a man, you distinguish whether what is said relates to his body or his soul. When I say Abraham is *dead*, I mean, obviously, his *mortal* part. When I say Abraham is *alive*, I mean, obviously, his *immortal* part. When the Evangelist says that Jesus increased in stature and wisdom, and in favour with God and man—that he ate, drank, slept, prayed, suffered, died, and rose again—he obviously means that his human nature did this. When he affirms that the *Logos* is God, and made the universe, and when Paul says that he is “supreme God, blessed for ever,” I cannot help thinking it to be equally obvious, that they predicate this of his divine nature. The simple answer to your question, then, is, that we must determine which nature is described, by what is affirmed concerning it. *The subject is known by its predicates.*

To the remarks just made on the proper humanity of Christ, and the principles of exegesis which result from it, let me add,

*Secondly*, That the appellation *Father* is not always used to designate that distinction in the Godhead which we commonly describe by calling it *the first person*; but that it is sometimes a general title of the divine nature. (See Deut. xxxii. 6. Is. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 3. Matt. v. 16, 48; vi. 4; vii. 11. John viii. 41.) In the same manner (*Κυριος*) *Lord* is applied often to Christ in particular, and to God as a general appellation. The Divinity is called *Father*, on account of that peculiar and provident care which he extends to all the creatures of his power. He is called *Lord* (*Κυριος*), because of his universal dominion.

Proper attention to this obvious principle will explain several passages, which have been thought to relate merely to what is denominated the first person in the Trinity; and to ascribe properties to him in an exclusive manner.

*Thirdly*, There is another observation which I cannot refrain from making here, and which seems to me of great importance, in regard to our mode of thinking and reasoning, on the subject of the distinction in the Godhead. This is, that no terms, which are applied by the Scriptures

to designate this distinction, or to predicate any thing of it, can be supposed *fully* and *definitely* to express what exists in the Godhead, or what is done by it. The obvious reason of this is, that the language of men (being all formed from perceptions of finite objects, by beings who are of yesterday, and whose sphere of knowledge is extremely limited) cannot possibly be adequate to express *fully* and *definitely* what pertains to the self-existent and infinite God. How often do men forget this in their reasonings about the Deity! In some things nearly all men agree in observing caution with regard to language which is applied to God. When the Scripture speaks of his having eyes, ears, hands, feet, &c. all men of a sound mind understand these terms as figurative; for the obvious reason that "God is a spirit," and that things of this nature can be literally predicated only of human beings that have flesh and blood. We mean to say, God *sees*, God *hears*, God *moves*, &c. when we attribute to him those members which we employ in performing such actions. And still, this is only the language of *approximation* to full description. What corresponds in the infinite, omniscient, omnipresent Spirit, to our *seeing*, and *hearing*, and *moving*, &c. must necessarily be different, in many important respects, from all these things in us.

When we say, "God is in heaven; the Lord looked down, or came down, from heaven; Jehovah sits upon a throne high and lifted up,"—or when we predicate any thing of him, which corresponds to the exaltation and magnificence of earthly monarchs,—we understand, of course, that this language is not to be taken literally, and as being fully adequate to the description aimed at, but only as that of approximation. When we say, "God is angry; God hates; God scorns; the Lord will deride, will laugh, will frown, will abhor," &c.,—do we predicate all these things of God in a literal manner, or do we understand them all as conveying to us an idea of something in the divine affections, actions, or mode of treating us, which corresponds to something that is in men, or which they do? The answer is very obvious; and in all this use of language, we apprehend or feel little or no difficulty. At least, none but enthusiastic visionaries, who would fain



make heaven like earth, and God like themselves; or ignorant men, whose thoughts are chained down to objects of sense, as to be incapable of elevation above them, are embarrassed by such expressions, or substantially misapprehend them.

Are we not now prepared to advance one step farther? May we not say, when the Scripture speaks of the *Logos*, as becoming flesh and dwelling among us—of his dwelling in the bosom of the Father—of his coming from God and being sent of him—of his humbling himself, and taking upon himself the condition of a servant, and other things of a like nature,—that we are not to suppose this language is adequate to describe, *fully and definitely*, the incarnation of the *Logos*, or his distinction from, or connexion with, the Father? If I may be allowed so to express myself, *It is all language of approximation*. It is so of course, and necessarily, as it regards any description of the *manner* of these things. Language, from its very nature, must be inadequate to such description. It was not formed with such facts in view; and finite beings, with knowledge so limited as ours, may well be supposed incapable of forming it, so as to be adequate to the full and definite description of what pertains to the Divinity. It may, nevertheless, express enough to excite our highest interest, and to command our best obedience, if we feel and act as rational beings. And so much is undoubtedly accomplished in the case which has just been stated.

The principle of exegesis here exhibited, had it been early acknowledged, and generally regarded in practice, would have saved the world much dispute, and two classes of men, in particular, much trouble. The one of these are men who, while admitting the inadequacy of language, in other respects, fully and definitely to describe the Divinity, have taken it for granted here, that no such inadequateness was to be found, and have sought to define and distinguish, until they have overwhelmed themselves and their readers with subtleties too tenuous for comprehension. The other, hostile to the doctrine of a distinction in the Godhead, have forced upon the expressions in question a sense that was far-fetched, and which violence only could make them to speak. It seems to me, that the path of

sound reason and common sense is the medium between these two extremes. I would not do violence to the expressions in question, nor would I understand them as *fully* and *definitely* describing what does exist in God, or is done by him. I believe they are the *language of approximation*; that they signify something which is in God, or something that has been done by him, that corresponds to those things among men, which would be described by similar language—something of the highest interest, of the deepest moment to the welfare of the human race. And though it might gratify my curiosity, and perhaps my pride, to know something more of the divine constitution, or mode of existing and acting, yet I can have no assurance, no good reason to believe, that it would contribute at present to facilitate my duties, or increase my happiness. I certainly have no good reason to suppose, that, in the present state, I am capable of understanding such subjects, beyond what is already revealed respecting them.

*Fourthly*, The attentive observer cannot but notice, that whether we contemplate God in his works or in his word, we cannot fail of finding things which are beyond our comprehension or power of explanation. The book of nature and of revelation, so far as they bring to view the being, character, and designs of the self-existent and infinite God, who created and governs the world, must contain many passages of the meaning of which we can never obtain more than a general and imperfect knowledge. "We know but in part."

In offering, then, to the mind, a view of what God is, and what he has done, we do not expect (at least we cannot reasonably expect) that this view should be all light, without any shade. Admitting that the Scriptures are of divine origin and authority, the question between us and Unitarians, in respect to what is revealed about the divine Being, is not whether the view which we suppose the Bible gives, is embarrassed by no obscurities—is without a shade—or whether theirs is such. The proper question is, Taking it for granted that what the Scriptures declare is true, which view, on the whole, comports best with the language of the sacred writings?—which is attended with the least embarrassment, all things considered? I well

know, that a moderate portion of sagacity will suffice to enable any one to press many questions upon Trinitarians, that are of difficult solution—many which are, in our present state, incapable of any solution. But I believe that the same degree of sagacity would enable one to raise more formidable difficulties still in the way of Unitarian sentiments.

In expounding texts of Scripture, therefore, which relate to the present subject in dispute, I am not very solicitous to give an interpretation which shall be above all question or embarrassment, whenever it appears to me that a different or contrary exposition will be attended with still greater embarrassments.

With the preceding observations before us, let me proceed to remark on some of the New Testament representations of Christ, which have been supposed to present difficulties in regard to the views that Trinitarians defend.

Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, is, as I apprehend, ever to be regarded as that complex person who may be described as human or divine,—in like manner as we may say of ourselves, we are *mortal* or *immortal*. As Mediator, then, it may be truly said, that by his obedience he merited and obtained a high reward,—*i. e.* this is predicated of that nature which was capable of obeying, and of being rewarded. So God is said to have “highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.” (Phil. ii. 9—11.) In a similar way, all power is *given* him in heaven, and in earth,—*i. e.* he is constituted “head over all things to his Church.” (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Acting as such a head, “all enemies are put under his feet.” (1 Cor. xv. 25—27.) And this mediatorial dominion, when the work of a mediator is completed, will be resigned at the final judgment. (1 Cor. xv. 28.)

Of the same tenour are many passages. When God is said to be the head of Christ (1 Cor. xi. 3), I understand it of that nature, of which this can be predicated. When Christ is called the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image (*χαρακτὴρ*) of his person,—*i. e.* of him; or the only begotten of the Father, the Son of God; God’s own Son; God’s beloved Son; his dear Son, &c.;—I understand all these as de-



scriptions of his mediatorial nature and station. I know, indeed, that many of these texts have been appropriated by some Trinitarians, to prove the divine nature of Christ—in my apprehension, however, injudiciously, and without any solid reason. Texts of this class may be found,—Matt. xvii. 5; John i. 14, x. 36, xiv. 10, iii. 35; Col. i. 13; Heb. i. 5; Rom. viii. 29, 32.

In Heb. v. 7—10, is a passage which has occasioned much speculation:—"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him: Called of God an high priest, after the order of Melchisedec."

If Christ had really a *human* nature, what is more perfectly consonant with reason and piety, than that he should act in the manner here described; or than that he should be exalted to glory, as the reward of these actions, and be constituted the Saviour of his people?

It is certainly more difficult to satisfy the mind in regard to John xiv. 28,—“My Father is greater ( $\mu\epsilon\iota\zeta\omega\iota$ ) than I.” On examination, however, it appears not to be the object of Christ to compare his own *nature* with that of the Father, but his *condition*. “If ye loved me,” said he to his weeping disciples, “ye would rejoice that I said, I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I,”—*i. e.* ye would rejoice that I am to leave this state of suffering and humiliation, and resume that “glory which I had with the Father before the world was.” You ought to rejoice at my exaltation to bliss and glory with the Father. So, in Hebrew, *great* is used for a state of prosperity, a happy state. Gen. xxvi. 13.

It is obvious here, that the whole text cannot be consistently explained, without the supposition of two natures,—the one which suffers and is depressed, in which, too, that other nature acts, that was in a state of glory with the Father before the world was,—*i. e.* from eternity. I cannot at all accede to the opinion of those interpreters who suppose that the glory here spoken of is only that

which the Father had *decreed* from eternity that Christ should have, in consequence of the promulgation of the gospel by him. The glory spoken of is not one that will result from what is to be done—it is a glory, *i. e.* a happiness or blessedness, *which Christ had with the Father* (*προς τον πατερα*) *before the world was*. On this passage the commentary of Kuinoel may be consulted, who has defended this exposition, as it seems to me, in a manner entirely unanswerable.

After all, it can be only in consequence of the peculiar union of the *Logos* with Jesus, that his *return to the Father* (so far as the *Logos* can be said, to return) can be spoken of; and only in reference to his humiliation\* that his *return to glory* can be expected. A thousand questions can easily be raised, and as many difficulties suggested; but they all spring from construing the language literally, and not merely as language which must, from the nature of the case, be that of *approximation*.

Mark xiii. 32, offers serious difficulties:—"Of that day and hour knoweth no man—no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The *day* and *hour* are, according to some, the day of judgment; but, as I apprehend (from comparing the context), the day of vengeance to the Jews is meant. To solve the difficulty presented, some have objected to the reading *ουδεις ο υιος* (neither the Son); but, to support this objection, there are no adequate authorities. Others, with Hilary (de Trinitate ix.), say that *not to know is not to publish or declare*. "*Ea nescit, quæ aut in tempore non sunt confitenda, aut non agnoscuntur ad meritum.*" There is no doubt that the verb *γινωσκω* (*to know*) sometimes has the sense of *making known*; but a derivative of the verb *ιδω* (*video, to see*) is used here, which does not bear such a sense; nor will the tenour of the verse admit it. To say, "That day and hour no man *maketh known*, neither the angels, nor the Son, but the Father," would be the same as saying that the Father *does make it known*. But where has he revealed it? After all, what more real difficulty presents itself in this case than in that where Jesus is said

\* *Εαυτον ενυπατασεν, εαυτον ιταπεινωσεν*, "*He made himself void, he humbled himself.*"

to have increased in wisdom? Luke ii. 52. If he did possess a nature really human, that nature was capable, of course, of progressive improvement and knowledge. And there is no proper method, as it appears to me, of solving the difficulty, as the text stands, but by appropriating, as in other cases, the expression to that nature of which the assertion made can be predicated.

John xvii. 3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The *true God* here seems to me, plainly, not opposed to, or contrasted with Christ; but, as everywhere else, in case this expression is used, *opposed to idols*. In the verse preceding, Christ says, "Thou hast given me power over ALL *flesh*, that thou mightest bestow eternal life upon ALL whom thou hast given me,"—i. e. both Jews and Gentiles. He proceeds,—“This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God (*the only God and true God*, the Greek is capable of being rendered, as to sense), and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Now, what is there here different from that which we preach and inculcate every Sabbath? Do we not teach that there is one only living and true God? And that he sent his Son to die for sinners? And do we not insist that eternal life is connected with the reception of these truths? I really see no more difficulty here than in the text, “God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I Cor. viii. 4—6, “As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or earth (as there be gods many and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him: And one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” I have cited several verses for the sake of introducing the context. From this it is plain that the one God, the Father, is not here placed in opposition to Christ, but to the *lords many and gods many* of the Heathen. If you insist that the *one God* is in opposition to *Christ*, or



excludes him, then, for the same reason as Christ is the *one Lord* (ὁς Κυριος), you must insist that it is in opposition to the *Lordship* (Κυριοτης) of the Father; and of course denies the *Lordship* of Creation to him. It is plain, however, according to my apprehension, that *God* and *Lord* here are mere synonymes. (See verse 5th, where λεγομενοι Θεοι is explained by Θεοι πολλοι and Κυριοι πολλοι). Nothing is plainer than that Κυριος is a common title of God in the Old Testament and the New.

Moreover, what is predicated of the *one God* and *one Lord* here is the same,—viz. they are the Author and Preserver of all things. The use of the preposition δια, in cases of this nature, has already been the subject of remark.

The nature of the whole case shows that the Apostle places the object of the Christian's worship in opposition to the Heathen or idol gods. What, then, is that object? The one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ; for whom are all things, and by whom are all things. The passage evidently holds out Christ to be, in the same manner, the object of the Christian's worship as the Father is. And, as the Apostle seems to me simply to assert the unity of God, in opposition to idols, I am not able to perceive how the divinity of the Saviour is impeached by it any more than the Lordship of the Father is impeached by making Christ the *one Lord*. To embrace my view of the whole passage in a brief paraphrase:—"Idols are nothing—there is but one God. There are indeed among the Heathen such as are called gods (λεγομενοι Θεοι), who comprise gods and lords many; yet Christians have only one object of worship—one God and Lord."

John x. 35, 36, "If he called them gods, unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" Christ had previously said, "I and my Father are one." At this the Jews took up stones to stone him, "because, being a man, he made himself God." It is perfectly clear that the Jews frequently understood, or pretended to understand, his affirmations respecting himself as amounting to assertions that he was

truly divine. In this case, however, it is said that Jesus repelled such an interpretation of his words by an explanation which shows that he applied to himself the word *God* only in an inferior sense.

I am not satisfied that the passage requires this exegesis. The reply of Jesus is evidently *argumentum ad hominem*. "If the Old Testament (the divine authority of which you admit) calls them *gods*, to whom the Word of God was addressed (Ps. lxxxii. 6), *i. e.* if it call the magistrates of the Jews *gods*, is it not proper that I, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, should call myself the *Son of God*?" If you are not offended when your Scriptures bestow the title of *Elohim* upon civil magistrates merely, much less is there reason to be angry when I, whom God hath distinguished from all others, made preëminent above them, and sent into the world on the designs of mercy, should call myself the *Son of God*. Verse 37,—If I prove not the truth of these assertions by miracles, then disbelieve them. Verse 38,—But, if I do, believe the proof that may be drawn from my miracles, *that the Father is in me and I in him*. Now, wherein did Jesus explain away any thing which he had before said? The expression *that the Father is in him and he in the Father*, I do not understand as asserting his divine nature in a direct manner. It is a phrase which is used to express the idea that any one is (*conjunctissimus Deo*) *most nearly and affectionately united with God*. (See 1 John iv. 16, where it is applied to Christians; also verses 12 and 13.)

In the whole passage it appears plain to me, that Jesus has not asserted any thing which could not be predicated of himself as sustaining the office of Messiah. He had called God *his Father*, and, as the Jews supposed, or seem to have supposed, in a peculiar and appropriate sense. But it did not follow that, by using this term, he meant to assert his divine nature. Rather the contrary appears. "Say ye of him whom the Father *hath sanctified and sent into the world*," *i. e.* the Son of God, &c. Jesus does not undertake, then, to answer the question here whether he is truly divine, but simply to vindicate the language he had used against the accusations of the Jews. "If your

magistrates are called *Elohim*, is it presumption in me to call myself the *Son of God*?" This leaves the question unagitated as to his divine nature, but vindicates the language he had used against the malignant aspersions of the Jews, by an argument drawn from their own Scriptures.

It shows, indeed, that the term "*Son of God*," does not *appropriately* designate Christ as divine, but as the incarnate Mediator—as him *whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world*. Did the Father *sanctify and send into the world* his *Son* as *GOD*, who is infinitely perfect and immutable? As Mediator, as Messiah, Christ was sent into the world—as *Son* he filled, and acted in a subordinate capacity. How, then, can his being *Son* prove him to be divine? *Son of God*, indeed, by usage, has become a kind of *proper name*; and, in this view, designates occasionally a distinction in the Godhead, which I believe to be eternal. In this manner we very commonly use the term now; and in this way the Apostles sometimes use it. (See Heb. i. 1—3.) But this is, in Scripture, only an *occasional* and *secondary* use of it. *Commonly* and *appropriately* it designates the incarnate Messiah, as born in a manner supernatural (Luke i. 35, comp. iii. 38); as the special object of divine love (Matt. xvii. 5, Col. i. 13, John iii. 35); and as exhibiting the best and highest resemblance of the Father (Col. i. 15, Heb. i. 3, John i. 14, x. 38, xiv. 10). Would theologians keep these ideas in view, I cannot help thinking they might be able to understand each other better, and to reason more conclusively.

I have thus summarily touched upon the principal texts which are employed by Unitarians to oppose the doctrines which I have been endeavouring to defend. Whether I have violated the laws of exegesis in doing this, and whether you or I must depart from them, in explaining the texts which seem to be at variance with the opinions that we defend, must be left to the judgment of the intelligent reader.

I must observe, however, before I close this Letter, which concludes what I have at present to advance, in respect to your sermon, that I do not omit making observations on the rest of the sermon because I accede to many



things which you profess to believe, or to the mode in which you have represented the sentiments of Trinitarians, in regard to various topics. I might mention the manner in which you accuse us of treating the moral attributes of God; your appropriating to yourself and your party, by implication, the exclusive belief in all that is amiable and excellent in the Deity (pp. 15—18); your assertion that the reproaches which you are obliged to encounter are occasioned chiefly by your zeal to vindicate the dishonoured goodness and rectitude of God (p. 18); the manner in which you state our views of the atonement, and by implication appropriate to Unitarians only, many important things in which we all agree (pp. 18—21); the appropriation also to Unitarians only, in a similar way, of many views respecting the love of God, rational zeal in religion, and the benevolent virtues; and the intimations that we are opposed to all that is excellent, and rational, and worthy of belief. The manner in which you have treated these topics, I do very much regret; and I cannot think that this is the way to convince opponents, or to terminate disputes. If I have attempted to hold up you, or Unitarians, to ridicule—if I have misrepresented your sentiments—made any effort to use the *argumentum ad invidiam*—appealed to human authorities to decide the question between us—or appealed to any thing but the sober rules of exegesis—then I desire to know it, and be humbled for it. I will not say that I have not transgressed in any of these particulars; for who that knows the human heart does not know that it is deceitful? But, I can say sincerely, I did not mean to transgress; and that I will, with all my heart, thank the man who, in the spirit of Christian love, will point out my error, and show me wherein I have written in such a way as to endanger or render repulsive the cause which I am advocating. That cause I believe to be just; and I should regret to employ any unfairness to defend it. What *real* interest have we but to know the truth? And what but simple argument can lead us to it?

I retire, then, from the field of review which the remainder of your sermon presents; for, since the pressure of my official duties, that cannot be abandoned or neglect-

ed, is so great, I am compelled to relinquish the idea, which I at first entertained, of pursuing the investigation of the topics presented by the remainder of your sermon.

I have but a few considerations to add, on the subject of the preceding pages; which must be reserved for another Letter.

## LETTER V.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

IN page 14th of your sermon you inform us of the method in which you explain those passages which seem to speak of the divine nature of Christ. The paragraph is as follows :—

“ I am aware that these remarks will be met by two or three texts in which Christ is called God, and by a class of passages, not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him. To these we offer one plain answer. We say, that it is one of the most established and obvious principles of criticism, that language is to be explained according to the known properties of the subject to which it is applied. Every man knows that the same words convey very different ideas, when used in relation to different beings. Thus, Solomon *built* the Temple in a different manner from the architect whom he employed ; and God *repents* differently from man. Now, we maintain, that the known properties and circumstances of Christ, his birth, sufferings, and death, his constant habit of speaking of God as a distinct being from himself, his praying to God, his ascribing to God all his power and offices,—these acknowledged properties of Christ, we say, oblige us to interpret the comparatively few passages, which are thought to make him the supreme God, in a manner consistent with his distinct and inferior nature. It is our duty to explain such texts by the rule which we apply to other texts, in which human beings are called gods, and are said to be partakers of the divine nature, to know and possess all things, and to be filled with all God's fulness. These latter passages we do not hesitate to modify and restrain, and turn from the most obvious sense, because this sense is opposed to the known properties of the beings to whom they relate ; and we maintain that we adhere to the same principle, and use no greater latitude, in explaining, as we do, the passages which are thought to support the Godhead of Christ.

I must *hesitate*, however, to adopt this principle, without examining its nature and tendency. On the supposition that you admit the Bible to be a revelation from God, as you aver, permit me to ask, whether it is the object of a revelation to disclose truths which are NOT known, or are insufficiently established ; or whether it is the object of a revelation to disclose truths *already known* and established ?



If you answer, The latter ; then your answer denies, of course, that it is a *revelation*. What the book of nature exhibits, the Scriptures do not *reveal*. Is there, then, any thing in the Scriptures, which the book of nature does not exhibit ? If you concede this, then I ask, How are we, on your ground, to obtain any notion of that thing which was *unknown* before it was *revealed* ?—*e. g.* the resurrection of the body is revealed. Now, it is a *known* property of the human body to corrupt and perish. Shall I construe a passage of Scripture, then, in such a manner as to contradict this *known* property ? If not, then I can never suppose the resurrection of the body to be revealed. I, however, do construe the Scriptures so as to contradict this apparently known property of the human body—following the obvious assertion of the sacred writers, and not allowing myself to force a constructive meaning upon their language. Yet, if I understand you, I am at liberty “to restrain and modify, and turn the words from their most obvious sense,” because this sense is opposed to the known properties of the matter of which our bodies are composed.

The case is just the same in regard to any other fact or doctrine. What I know already of a thing is, if you are correct, “to modify and restrain, and turn from their obvious sense,” the words which are employed in revealing it, because what is revealed I suppose to be at variance with some *known* doctrines or properties. Is there not room here for great caution, and great doubt as to the correctness of your principle ?

According to this principle, moreover, the Scriptures may be construed very differently by persons of different degrees of knowledge. One man knows the properties of things far more extensively than his neighbour. He sees that what is revealed may consist with *known properties* of things : but his neighbour, who lacks this knowledge, is unable to perceive the consistency of revelation with what he knows ; and this, because his knowledge does not qualify him to judge, or because what he thinks he knows, he is really ignorant of. The same text in the Bible, therefore, may be received by one as a consistent part of revelation, and rejected by the other. The measure of a

man's knowledge, consequently, cannot be a proper test by which the meaning of Scripture is to be proved.

But you will say, "I can never believe in the reality of a revelation which contradicts my reason." I accede. And here is the very place where I find the greatest difficulty with your theory of interpretation. You do not seem to me to carry your objections back to the proper place. If *God manifest in the flesh* be an absurdity,—a palpable contradiction—"an enormous tax upon human credulity," as you aver—then the claims of the book which asserts this are no doubt to be disregarded. What is palpable contradiction we certainly can never believe.

But, in determining what the Scriptures have taught, we have no right to say, that because any particular doctrine is repugnant to our views, therefore we will "modify and restrain, and turn from the obvious sense," the words in which it is conveyed. The rules of exegesis are not a mass of wax, which can be moulded at pleasure into any shape that we may fancy. We do as great violence to reason—to the first principles of all reasoning—when we reject these rules, as when we admit absurdities to be true.

In case an obscure term is used, I acknowledge that clear passages, relating to the same subject, are to be adduced to ascertain its meaning. If Christ had been simply called *God*, I should allow that this term *might* be explained by its use as applied to inferior beings: but when the sacred writers themselves have explained the meaning which they attach to it, by telling us that Christ is the God who created and governs the world—who is omniscient and eternal—the object of religious worship and prayer—God over all, or supreme God (not to mention "the true God," and the "Great God")—there is no law of exegesis, no method of interpretation, which can obscure their meaning, that is not violence—an infringement of the fundamental principles of interpretation—and therefore an abandonment of the first principles of our reason. It does appear to me, therefore, that my only resource in such a case is, to reject their authority, if I disbelieve the doctrine. To say that they did not mean to teach what they most obviously have taught, I *cannot—must not*;—no book can be understood—no writer can be interpreted at all—by

such a rule of exegesis, without forcing upon him the opinions of his readers. My system of philosophy, we will say, differs from yours. What you view to be a palpable contradiction and absurdity, I view as rational and consistent. This, we know, is not an uncommon fact. In reading a book, then, that respects the subject of our differing opinions, you hold yourself bound to construe it, so as to save all that appears to you contradictory or absurd: I interpret it just as its language obviously means, by the common laws of exegesis, which do not depend on my philosophy. This book, then, may have two different meanings, according to us, in the same passages. Is this so? *Can it be?* Or rather, are not the laws of interpretation independent of you or me? If not, how can the meaning of any writer be ever obtained?

You and I differ as to what John has taught in the first chapter of his gospel. I commence reading him with the full conviction that I cannot determine *a priori*, in all respects, what the nature of God and Christ is, and with the belief that John wrote what is a revelation from heaven. I read John and interpret him just as I do any other author, ancient or modern, by the general rules of exegesis, modified by the special circumstances and dialect in which he wrote. I am as well satisfied that he meant to assert the truly divine nature of the *Logos*, as I am that he has made any assertion at all. I receive this assertion, therefore, as declaring a fact which I ought to believe, and which, if I admit his inspiration, I must believe. In the same manner I treat all other passages which respect this subject. I come in this way to the conclusion that Christ is truly divine—that he has a human and divine nature so united (I undertake not to tell in what manner), that he speaks of either nature as himself. The passages which seem to imply his inferiority to God, I find to be capable of explanation without contradiction, or doing violence to the language, by the obvious fact that he has two natures united, which the sacred writers seem to me so plainly to inculcate. In this way I find one consistent whole. I save the laws of exegesis. I admit, indeed, on the authority of revelation, doctrines which natural religion never



taught; but *why should not a revelation teach something which natural religion did not?*

Here, then, I take my stand. *I abide by the simple declarations of the New Testament writers, interpreted by the common laws of language.* My views reconcile all the seeming discrepancies of description in regard to Christ, without doing violence to the language of any. I can believe, and do believe, that the sacred writers are consistent, without any explanation but such as the laws of interpretation admit and require.

On the other hand, when you read the 1st of John, you say, The known properties of Christ must modify the description. How, then, are those properties *known*? By the same writer—the same authority—the same revelation. But what can give to one part of John's book any more credit than to the other part? You will say you can understand better how Christ can be inferior to God, than how he can be divine. Granting this might be the case, is a revelation merely to teach us things which are obvious? or may it disclose those which are most difficult, and cannot be discovered by unassisted reason? If the latter, how can you aver that Christ may not be revealed as a divine person? To show *a priori* that this is impossible or absurd, is really out of the question. The religion of nature teaches nothing for or against this fact. The simple question then is, What has John said? Not what your philosophy may lead you to regard as probable or improbable. And I must be allowed to say again, if John has not taught us that Christ is truly divine, I am utterly unable, by the laws of exegesis, to make out that he has asserted any thing in his whole gospel.

If I believed, then, as you do, that a Saviour with a human and divine nature is "an enormous tax on human credulity," I should certainly reject the authority of John. To violate the laws of exegesis, in order to save his credit, I could regard, with my present views, as nothing more than striving to keep up a fictitious belief in divine revelation. It is what I cannot do, and what no man ought to do. It would be impossible for me, with your views, to hesitate at all about giving up entirely the old idea of the

divine inspiration and authority of the sacred books. How can they be divine if they teach palpable absurdities? And that they do teach what you call palpable absurdities, I feel quite satisfied can be amply proved from the simple application of the laws of interpretation.

You have, however, undertaken to vindicate your method of construing the Scriptures, by intimating the necessity of interpreting several seemingly unlimited assertions, in respect to *Christians*, in the same way as you do many in respect to Christ. "Recollect," you say, "the unqualified manner in which it is said of Christians, that they possess all things, know all things, and do all things." And again, in order to show how we may "modify and restrain, and turn from the obvious sense," the passages that respect the divinity of Christ, you say, "It is our duty to explain such texts, by the rule which we apply to other texts, in which human beings are called gods, and are said to be partakers of the divine nature, to know and possess all things, and to be filled with all God's fulness."

I have already examined the manner in which the Bible calls men *gods*. There is and can be no mistake here; for, instead of attributing to them divine attributes, it always accompanies the appellations with such adjuncts as guard against mistake. It does not call any man *God*; and then add, that the *God* is meant who is the Creator of the universe.

Nor does the New Testament anywhere call *men God*. Will you produce the instance, unless it be in the case of Christ, which is the case in question? But that the appellation here is bestowed under circumstances totally diverse from those in which it is applied to men in the Old Testament, is a fact too obvious to need farther explanation. The Hebrew word *Elohim* had plainly a latitude more extensive,—i. e. it was capable of a greater variety of use than the Greek word *Θεός* (*Theos*, God). Can you produce from the Greek Scriptures, i. e. the New Testament, an instance where *Θεός* is applied to any *man* whatever?

In regard to the assertion, "that Christians are made partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4), a mistake about the meaning is scarcely possible. Whereby (i. e.

by the gospel) are given unto us," says the Apostle, "exceeding great and precious promises, that **BY THESE** ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*." But how? He answers this question:—"Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." That is, by moral purification you will become assimilated to God, or partakers of that holy nature which he possesses. Does the context here afford any ground for mistake?

In 1 John ii. 20, Christians are said to have "an unction from the Holy One, and *to know all things*." In the preceding verse, the Apostle had been describing apostates who forsook the Christian cause, because they were not sincerely attached to it. The case of real Christians, who have an unction from the Holy One, is different. They "know all things." And what means this? The sequel explains it:—"I have not written unto you," says he, because *ye know not the truth*; but because *ye know it*, and that no lie is of the truth." To "know all things," then, plainly means here, to know all that pertains to Christian doctrine and duty, so as to persevere, and not to apostatize from the truth, as others had done.

Is this, however, asserting (as you affirm in your Sermon), in "*an unqualified manner*, that Christians know all things?"

In John xiv. 26, the Holy Ghost is promised to the Apostles, "*to teach them all things*, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them." Again (John xvi. 13), the "Spirit of Truth is promised to guide the disciples *into all truth*;" and, in 1 John ii. 27, the anointing which Christians have received is said to "teach them all things." In all these cases, the context leaves no room to doubt that "all things essential to Christian doctrine and practice" is meant. No person, I presume, ever understood these passages as meaning that the Apostles or Christians should be endowed with omniscience.

Yet, in the other case, where Christ is asserted to be *God*, the context is such, that the great body of Christians, in every age, have understood the sacred writers as asserting that he was truly divine. Is there no difference between the two cases? You make them indeed the same,



in respect to the principle of interpretation. To my mind the difference is this,—that, in the one case, the adjuncts *prevent* you from ascribing omniscience to Christians; in the other, they *lead you necessarily to ascribe divine properties to Christ*, unless you “turn their meaning from the obvious sense,” so far as to transgress the fundamental maxims of interpreting language.

In 1 Cor. iii. 22, the Apostle says to the Corinthian Churches, “All things are yours;” and the same Apostle speaks of himself (2 Cor. vi. 10) as “having nothing, yet *possessing all things*.” In the first case, the context adds, “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours, and ye are Christ’s,”—*i. e.* simply, (when the phraseology is construed as elsewhere), let no man glory in this or that particular teacher; all teachers belong to the Church; and all things in the present and future world will minister to the good of the Church. Why should you covet exclusive individual possessions, when you have an interest in the whole? Refrain, therefore, from the spirit of jealousy and contention.

The second case is merely antithesis. The Apostle evidently asserts (compare the context), that although he has little indeed of this world’s good, yet he possesses a far more excellent and satisfactory good, in comparison of which all else is nothing. In the same sense, we every day speak of a man’s *all*,—meaning that which he most desires and loves best.

I can no more see here than in the other instances already discussed, why you should affirm that Christians are said, “in an *unqualified* manner, to possess all things.”

One expression still remains. In Eph. iii. 19, the Apostle exhibits his fervent wishes that the Christians of Ephesus might “be filled with all the fulness of God.” By comparing this expression, as applied to Christ in Col. i. 19, ii. 9, with John i. 14, 16, and Eph. i. 23, it appears evident, that, by the *fulness of God*, is meant the abundant gifts and graces which were bestowed on Christ, and through him upon his disciples,—John i. 16. Eph. i. 23. When Paul prays, therefore, that the Church at Ephesus might be “filled with the fulness of God,” he prays simply

that they might be abundantly replenished with the gifts and graces peculiar to the Christian religion. But how does such an affirmation concern the principle of exegesis in question?

I am well satisfied that the course of reasoning in which you have embarked, and the principle now in question, by which you explain away the divinity of the Saviour, must lead most men who approve of them, eventually to the conclusion that the Bible is not of divine origin, and does not oblige us to belief or obedience. I do not aver that they will lead you there. You have more serious views of the importance of religion than many, perhaps, of those who speculate with you. Consistency with your present views will afford strong inducement not to give up the divine authority of the Scriptures. But are there not some who embrace Unitarian sentiments, that have no inconsistency to fear by adopting such an opinion? Deeming what you have publicly taught them to be true,—viz. that it is “no crime to believe with Mr. Belsham,” who declares that the *Scriptures are not the word of God*,—feeling the inconsistency (as I am certain some of them will and do feel it) of violating the rules of interpretation, in order to make the Apostles speak, as in their apprehension they ought to speak, and unable to reconcile what the Apostles say, with their own views,—will it not be natural to throw off the restraints which the old ideas of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures impose upon them, and receive them simply on the ground on which they place any other writings of a moral and religious nature.

I make no pretensions to uncommon foresight, in regard to this subject. I certainly do not say these things with invidious designs, and for the sake of kindling the fire of contention. Very far from it. On the contrary, I fear that the parties now contending here, will not cease to contend, until this ground be openly taken. For myself, I regard it as more desirable, in many points of view, that the authority of the Scripture should at once be cast off, and its claims to divine inspiration rejected, than that such rules of exegesis should be introduced, as to make the Scriptures speak, against their obvious meaning, whatever

any party may desire. Avowed unbelief in the divine authority of the Scriptures can never continue long, as I would fain believe, in the present day of light and examination. Such a state of things may pass away with the generation who act in it: But it is a more difficult matter to purge away the stain which Christianity may contract by violated laws of interpretation. Those who do thus violate these laws, may obtain and hold, for a long time, great influence over the mass of people who are not accustomed to examine, in a critical manner, the nicer points of theology. If opponents to this method of interpretation lift up the voice of warning, they may not be heard. They are liable to the imputation of bigotry, or illiberality, or ignorance. But when men professedly cast off their respect to the authority of the Scriptures, the case becomes different, and the great body of plain and sober people will revolt.

In making these observations on the nature and probable consequences of that exegesis which explains away the Deity of Christ, I cannot think that I am building castles in the air to amuse my own imagination. For ten years past, I have been called every week to duties which necessitated me to be conversant with the history of interpretation, as it has appeared in Germany, a country which, in half a century, has produced more works on criticism and sacred literature than the world contains besides. About fifty years since, Semler, Professor of Divinity, at Halle, began to lecture and publish on the subject of interpretation, in a manner that excited the attention of the whole German Empire. The grand principle by which he explained away whatever he did not think proper to believe, was that which has been called *accommodation*. He maintained that the Apostles and Saviour often admitted representations and doctrines into their instructions, which were calculated merely for the purpose of persuading the Jews, being *accommodated* to their prejudices; but which were not intended to be a real directory of sentiment. In this way, whatever was inconsistent with his own views, he called *accommodation*; and thus, at once, expunged it from the list of Christian doctrines.

Semler's original genius and great learning soon gave



currency to his views in Germany, where a system of theology and exegesis had prevailed, which, in not a few respects, needed reformation. Since his time, a host of writers (many of them with exalted talents and most extensive erudition) have arisen, who have examined, explained, modified, and defended the doctrine of *accommodation*. The more recent method of exegesis, however, in Germany, has been to solve all the miraculous facts related in the Bible, by considerations which are affirmed to be drawn from the idiom and ignorance of antiquity in general, and in particular of the sacred writers themselves. Thus, with Eichhorn, the account of the creation and fall of man is merely a poetical and philosophical speculation, of some ingenious person, on the origin of the world and of evil. (*Urgeschichte*, *passim*.) So, in regard to the offering up of Isaac by Abraham, he says, "The Godhead could not have required of Abraham so horrible a crime; and there can be no justification, palliation, or excuse, for this pretended command of the Divinity." He then explains it. "Abraham *dreamed* that he must offer up Isaac; and, according to the superstition of the times, regarded it as a divine admonition. He prepared to execute the mandate which his dream had conveyed to him. A lucky accident (probably the rustling of a ram who was entangled in the bushes) hindered it; and this, according to ancient idiom, was also the voice of the Divinity." (*Bibliothek*. Band i. s. 45, &c.)

The same writer represents the history of the Mosaic legislation, at Mount Sinai, in a curious manner. Moses ascended to the top of Sinai and built a fire there—(how he found wood on this barren rock, or raised it to the top, Eichhorn does not tell us)—a fire consecrated to the worship of God, before which he prayed. Here an unexpected and tremendous thunder-storm occurred. He seized the occasion to proclaim the laws which he had composed in his retirement as the statutes of Jehovah,—leading the people to believe that Jehovah had conversed with him. Not that he was a deceiver; but he really believed that the occurrence of such a thunder-storm was a sufficient proof of the fact that Jehovah had spoken to him, or sanctioned the work in which he had been engaged. (*Bibliothek*. Band

i. Theil. 1, s. 76, &c.) The prophecies of the Old Testament are, according to him, patriotic wishes, expressed with all the fire and elegance of poetry, for the future prosperity and a future deliverer of the Jewish nation. (Propheten, Bibliothek, Einleit. passim.)

In like manner, C. F. Ammon, Professor of Theology, at Erlangen, tells us, in respect to the miracle of Christ's walking on the water, that, "to walk on the sea, is not to stand on the waves, as on the solid ground, as Jerome *dreams*, but to walk through the waves so far as the shoals reached, and then to swim." (Pref. to edit. of Ernesti Inst. Interpret. p. 12.) So in regard to the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Matt. xiv. 15), he says that Jesus probably distributed some loaves and fishes which he had to those who were around him, and thus excited, by his example, others among the multitude, who had provisions, to distribute them in like manner. (P. 16.)

Thiess, in his commentary on the Acts, explains the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.) in the following manner. "It is not uncommon," says he, "in those countries, for a violent gust of wind to strike on a particular spot or house. Such a gust is commonly accompanied by the electric fluid, and the sparks of this are scattered all around. These float about the chamber, become apparent, and light upon the disciples. They kindle into enthusiasm at this; and believe the promise of their Master is now to be performed. This enthusiasm spectators assemble to witness; and, instead of preaching, as before, in Hebrew, each one uses his own native tongue to proclaim his feelings."

I have not followed the words through the whole, but have given the substance of Thiess's views in my two last sentences. Such was the outpouring of the Spirit, and such the gift of tongues.

The same Thiess (Comm. on chap. iii.) represents the miraculous cure by Peter, of the man who was lame from his birth, in a very singular way. "This man," says he, "was lame only according to report. He never walked any; so the people believed that he could not walk..... Peter and John, being more sagacious, however, *threatened* him. 'In the name of the Messiah,' said they, 'stand up.' The

word *Messiah* had a magical power. He stood up. Now, one saw that he could walk. To prevent the compassion of men from being turned into rage (at his deceit), he chose the most sagacious party, and connected himself with the Apostles."

The case of Ananias falling down dead, is thus represented by the same writer. "Ananias fell down terrified; but probably he was carried out and buried, while still alive."

Heinrichs, however, who produces this Comment of Thiess, relates another mode of explaining the occurrence in question,—viz. that *Peter stabbed Ananias*; "which," says Heinrichs, "does not at all disagree with the vehement and easily-exasperated temper of Peter." (Nov. Test. Koppianum, vol. iii. partic. ii. pp. 355—357, &c.)

Numerous systems of Hermeneutica, *i. e.* the Art of Interpretation, have been written and published in Germany, on this plan. Meyer, in a very laboured system of Hermeneutica of the Old Testament, in two large octavos, has a body of rules by which every thing miraculous is to be explained away. He concedes that there is the same objection to admitting any one miracle, as to admitting all. He therefore rejects the whole. So Bauer, in his Hermeneutica; and a multitude of others.

In the course of the discussions which these principles have excited in Germany, the question about Christ's divinity has been entirely forgotten. When the contest first began, this point, among others, was warmly contested. But the fundamental questions, whether the Scriptures are divinely inspired, and whether the doctrine of *accommodation* can be used in all its latitude, in interpreting them, soon took the place of this. *Accommodation* has been sifted, attacked, defended, explained, moderated, modified, itself *accommodated*; so that, at last, it is nearly driven from the ground, and the plain and simple rules of grammatical interpretation are triumphant among the best part of the German critics.

In the mean time, they have not returned to the principles of their Lutheran Symbol. Very far from it. While many of them allow that John, and Peter, and Paul, did believe and teach the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and of



the atonement, they hold themselves under no obligation to receive them. De Wette, who has recently published a *System of Theology*, and is Professor of the same at the University of Berlin, maintains that the Pentateuch was composed about the time of the Captivity; that the Jewish ritual was of gradual formation, accessions being made to it by superstition; and that the Book of Chronicles (which is filled with scraps and inconsistencies) was foisted into the canon by some of the priesthood, who wished to exalt their own order. His *Beiträge*, which contained these sentiments, was published before the death of Griesbach, and came out recommended by him, who says, "If you object to the young literary adventurer (De Wette), that he has endeavoured to bring Judaism into disrepute, my answer is, This is no more than Paul himself has laboured to do."—(Pref. to *Beiträge*.)

In his book on the atonement of Christ, (*De morte Christi expiatoria*,) he represents Christ as disappointed that the Jews would not hearken to him as a moral teacher simply; which was the first character he assumed. Christ then assumed the character of a prophet, and asserted his divine mission, in order that the Jews might be induced to listen to him. Finding that they would not do this, and that they were determined to destroy him, in order not to lose the whole object of his mission, and to convert necessity into an occasion of giving himself credit, he gave out that his death itself would be *expiatory*.

Yet De Wette holds a most exalted rank in Germany. I doubt whether Germany can boast of an oriental scholar, or a literary man, who has more admirers than De Wette.

What shall we say now of De Wette? That he is not a Christian? He would look with astonishment on any man who would think of such an accusation, and tax him with a great degree of illiberality and superstition.

You are doubtless inclined, before this time, to say, "What is all this to us? We do not avow or defend such opinions." True, I answer,—at present you do not. A short time since, *they* did not: but as soon as their numbers increased, so that they began to be fearless of consequences, and their antagonists urged the laws of exegesis

upon them, they abandoned the ground of defending the divine authenticity of the Bible at once. A few years since, the state of theological questions in Germany, in many respects, was similar to what it now is here. At present, the leading German critics (rejecting *accommodation*, and casting off all ideas of the divine origin of the Scriptures), are disputing with great zeal the questions, Whether a miracle be possible? Whether God and Nature are one and the same thing? (Schelling, a *divine*, is at the head of a great party which maintains that they are the same.) And whether the Jews ever expected any Messiah? Some time ago, many of their critics maintained that no Messiah was predicted in the Old Testament; but now, they question even whether the Jews had any expectation of one. It would seem now, that they have come nearly to the end of questions on *theology*: at least I cannot well devise what is to come next.

It does seem to me, that it needs only a thorough acquaintance with German reasoners and critics (a thing which is fast coming in), to induce young men to go with them, who set out with the maxim, that "to believe with Mr Belsham is no crime." No man can read these writers without finding a great deal of excellent matter in them, well arranged, and of real utility. I venture to add, that no man can study them thoroughly, and afterwards take up Priestley, Belsham, Carpenter, Yates, Lindsay, or other recent English Unitarian writers, as *critics*, with any pleasure. I ought, perhaps, to except Cappe, who appears to have studied diligently his Bible. He was evidently a lover of Biblical study. But the incomparably greater acquisitions of the German critics, in every department of study, spread a charm over their writings, for the lover of discussion and literature, that is not often found in productions of this nature. I must add, that, much as I differ in sentiment from them, and *fundamentally subversive of Christianity* as I believe their views to be, I am under great obligations to them for the instructions they have given me; and specially for affording me so much satisfaction, that we need nothing more than the simple rules of exegesis, and a candid believing heart, to see in the Scriptures, with overpowering evidence, all the substantial and

important doctrines which have commonly been denominated *orthodox*.

Such has been the impression on me from reading German writers: and, with such impressions, I can never regret the time that I have spent in studying them. Abler advocates than they for the fashionable philosophy of the day, which is endeavouring to explain away the peculiar doctrines of the Scriptures, I do not expect to find.

Able, however, as they are, my mind returns from the study of them with an impression more deep, radical, and satisfactory than ever before, that the doctrines commonly denominated *evangelical* or *orthodox*, are the doctrines of the Scriptures, and are the truth of God. My views as to the exegesis of particular texts, in some cases, have been changed by the study of philology and interpretation. I should not rely for the proof of doctrines now, on some texts which I once thought contained such proof. But my impressions of the real truth and importance of evangelical doctrines, I can truly say, are greatly strengthened.

Before you pronounce sentence upon the German expositors and critics, to whom I have referred above, I trust you will give them a hearing. I should rejoice to find that you are engaged in the study of them: for a mind capable of reasoning and thinking as yours, must necessarily, as it seems to me, come to the same conclusions with Eichhorn, and Paulus, and Henke, and Eckermann, and Herder, and other distinguished men of the new German school; or embrace with us the sentiments which are commonly denominated *orthodox*. I cannot refrain from adding, that I do most earnestly hope and pray for the latter.

You may be ready, perhaps, to express your surprise, that I should commend the study of such writers as those whom I have quoted. I am well aware, indeed, that the serious mind revolts at the glaring impiety of such comments as those which I have produced: but, after all, if a man were to judge of and condemn these very writers by a few selections of this nature, it would be hasty. On points which are not concerned with the special doctrines of Christianity—in illustrating critical and literary history, philology, natural history, and grammatical exegesis—in a



word, every thing literary or scientific that pertains to the Bible—who can enter into competition with recent German writers? But it should be understood, that there are writers on these subjects in Germany, who are what is denominated *orthodox*, as well as those of a different character, such as I have just mentioned. The lover of acute, thorough-going, radical discussion, will lose much, if he does not cultivate an acquaintance with both these classes of writers.

I know, indeed, that you are an advocate for unlimited research. For myself, I have long practised upon this principle; and I cannot but think the cautious fears of many of those with whom I agree in sentiment, in respect to the limits of study, though honourable to the spirit of piety which they cherish, and indicative of real interest and concern for the prosperity of the Church, are not well-founded. The fundamental principle of Protestantism is, that the *Bible is the only rule of faith and practice*. To know what the Bible teaches, then, is the great object of all religious knowledge. To understand this, (as to acquire every thing else,) study and diligence are necessary. Men are not inspired now, as the Apostles and primitive Christians were, to understand all truth. Men are imperfect, and have imperfect knowledge. No one sect, party, or body of men, can claim absolute perfection of knowledge or virtue. And as a great many points of inquiry (interesting and important ones too), may be managed by men of sobriety, in the use of only their natural intellect, and their resources of learning, the man who loves the Book of God, and desires the most extensive acquaintance with it which he can possibly make, will not neglect their works, nor any other source of knowledge within his power. It was a noble maxim of a Heathen, "*Fas est et ab hoste doceri*;" *We may receive instruction even from an enemy*. Christians too often forget this; and permit antipathy to particular sentiments, to exclude them from all the profit which might be derived from a more enlarged acquaintance with the writings of opponents. Believing, as I do, that many who are arrayed against the sentiments that I espouse, are not destitute of sense, or of learning, and are not to be despised, I am inclined always

to see how they vindicate their cause. If I am not convinced by *their* arguments, I am rendered better satisfied with *my own*, and more able to defend them by such an investigation. But if I could not practise upon the noble maxim, "*We may receive instruction even from an enemy,*" I would at least apply another one to vindicate the study of the German writers, and justify myself for even recommending it, in proper cases. I would say (as was said in a different connexion, and for a different object), "*Egyptii sunt, spoliemus;*" *They are Egyptians, let us take their spoils.* Shall I not accept the good which they proffer me, and proffer me in a more scientific manner, and well digested, lucid, established form, than I can elsewhere find? Without hesitation, I answer, Yes.

I cannot help viewing the subject in another light. Every student in theology, every Christian minister, ought to be established in the truth, and able to "*convince gainsayers.*" How can he do this, *if he does not know what these gainsayers allege?* Is he to engage in war against the foes of truth, without knowing the weapons by which his enemies are to assail him? It is a mistaken system of education, indeed, which teaches him thus—which thrusts out a young man upon the Church, unacquainted with the nature of its enemies' assaults, and liable, of course, to become the victim of the first powerful attack that is made upon him. Without any doubt, private Christians should have little or nothing to do with all this ground of dispute; but it is a shame for a minister of the gospel, who has the opportunity, not to seize every advantage in his power to render himself as able as possible to defend the cause which he has espoused.

I may venture to add a better authority still, to confirm these reasonings. An inspired Apostle has directed Christians to "*prove all things;*" but to "*hold fast that which is good.*" How does he comply with the spirit of this direction, who never examines any views that differ from his own; but settles down with the full conviction that he is right, and that all who differ from him are wrong? As no man, now, is inspired, and no man, therefore, is free from some error, does it not become those who are to be "*set for the defence of the truth,*" to examine,

as far as it may be in their power, the dissentient views of others, who have called themselves Christians, and who lay claim to an extensive understanding of the Word of God? Such an examination will enlarge their views, and render them more able to oppose error and defend truth.

Such are my reasons for pursuing the study of German writers, and commending the study of them. Truth has nothing to fear from examination. If the sentiments that I espouse will not stand the test of investigation, then I will abandon them. I never shall willingly embrace any sentiments, except on such a condition. But, in respect to the study of the more *liberal* (so called) German writers, I fear no injury from it in the end to the sentiments denominated *evangelical*. Exegesis has come, by discussion among them, to a solid and permanent science. That the Scriptural writers taught substantially, what we believe to be *orthodoxy*, is now conceded by some of their most able expositors.

There is another point of view in which the subject may be regarded. The person who reads their works will see what the spirit of doubt and unbelief can do, in respect to the Book of God, and where it will carry the men who entertain it. It is indeed a most affecting and awful lesson. But is there no reason to fear that we are to learn it by sad experience? Does not the progress of the sentiments which you defend illustrate the nature of this subject? A short time since, almost all the Unitarians of New England were simple Arians. Now, if I am correctly informed, there are scarcely any of the younger preachers of Unitarian sentiments who are not simple *Humanitarians*. Such was the case in Germany. The divinity of Christ was early assailed; inspiration was next doubted and impugned. Is not this already begun here? Natural religion comes next in order; and the question between the parties here may soon be, in substance, whether *natural* or *revealed* religion is our guide and our hope.

For myself, I must say, it is my conviction, that the sooner matters come to this issue the better. Not that natural religion is better in itself than Unitarianism: No. I believe that Christianity, under any form, is better than



Deism. But the contest which is now carried on here will be more speedily terminated by such an issue. The parties will then understand each other; and the public will understand the subject of dispute. I cannot think that they do at present. It is but very recently that explicit declarations have been made in print by you and your friends. And, though with such views as I possess, I cannot help feeling the most sincere regret that such sentiments should be propagated; yet I can never do otherwise than applaud that ingenuousness which openly avows sentiments that are more privately inculcated. I shall be very ready to confess my apprehensions are quite erroneous, if the lapse of a few years more does not produce, in many cases, the undisguised avowal of the German divinity, in all its latitude. I anticipate this, because I believe that the laws of exegesis, when thoroughly understood, and applied without party bias, will necessarily lead men to believe that the Apostles inculcated, for substance, those doctrines which are now called *orthodox*. And as there will probably be not a few who will reject these doctrines, my apprehension is, that, to take the German ground, will, ere long, be deemed both ingenuous and expedient.

Believing, however, as I now do, while my convictions remain, I must act agreeably to them. I hope I shall never be guilty of exercising an exclusive or persecuting spirit. But, while my present views last, I cannot look with indifference on the great contest which is pending in this part of our country. I must regard the opinions, which you have avowed in your sermon, to be fundamentally subversive of what appear to me to be the peculiarities of the Christian system. If the doctrine of Christ's divinity and humanity be not true, nor that of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, and pardon by it—if human nature be not of itself entirely destitute of principles of holiness, that may fit men for heaven, and does not need special regenerating and sanctifying grace—then I know not what there is in the Christian system, that very much concerns our duty or our interest, which is not taught by the principles of natural religion, nor what there is for which it is our duty to contend. The great question at present be-

tween you and me is, What does the Bible teach on the subjects proposed? For our answer to this question, you and I stand accountable to the Judge of quick and dead; and, as ministers of his gospel, and interpreters of his word, we are placed under an awful responsibility. If either of us violate the reason which God has given us in our inquiries—are led by partial views, by passion, by prejudice, by thirst for popularity with our friends, or a fear of reproach from those whom we are obliged to consider as opponents—Christ will require from us an account of our conduct. When I think on this, and look back and ask myself whether I have conducted this whole dispute with a view to my account and in the fear of God, I cannot but feel solicitude lest, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, something may have escaped me which may prove prejudicial, in some way or other, to the promotion of real truth. If you see this, my dear Sir, tell me where and what it is. We have no real interest but to know, believe, and obey the truth. And, supposing truth to be what it now appears to me to be, I cannot believe otherwise than that you are endeavouring to inculcate principles radically subversive of the gospel of Christ. Will you do me the justice to believe that I may have honestly formed such an opinion, without taking my faith from creeds, or grounding it on tradition; and without the spirit that would establish an inquisition, or lord it over the consciences of men, or treat you with disrespect?

In a word, with those who have the convictions that I possess of the nature and importance of the gospel system, it can never admit of a question, whether they are to make all the opposition in their power (provided it be done in the spirit of Christian candour and benevolence), to the prevalence of sentiments like yours. I cannot but view the question between us as amounting to this, whether we shall retain Christianity, or reject all but the name? If I am wrong, may the Lord forgive me, and grant me better views. If you are wrong, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that the same blessing may be bestowed on you.

Allowing that I and those with whom I act are sincere in our belief, you yourself would say, that we should be justly chargeable with the greatest inconsistency, did we

not feel strong desires to resist the innovations that are attempted in many important points of our theology. Permit me to add, that real charity may sometimes attribute strong feelings and a deep interest on this subject, to ardent benevolence towards those who differ from us, and whom we think to be in a dangerous condition, rather than to party zeal, blind credulity and ignorance, or an exterminating and injurious spirit.

And now, to bring these already protracted Letters to a close, you will permit me respectfully and seriously to solicit that you would look back and review the Sermon which has occasioned these remarks. Have you represented the sentiments of the great body of Christians in this country correctly? Have you produced the real arguments on which they rely? Have you treated them with respect, with gentleness, with tenderness? Has your simple aim been to reason with them, to convince them, and not to hold them up in such an attitude as to excite disgust? I do not ask these questions for the sake of reproach, or to wound your feelings; but I cannot help thinking it a duty incumbent on me to ask them. Look now, with a Christian eye, on the unhappy and distracted state of the Churches in this land, the glory of all lands! When will our contentions cease! When shall we bring a united offering to our common Lord, if men who stand in eminent and responsible stations treat those whom they profess to own as *Christian brethren*, with severity, or in such a manner as to wound their feelings!

My dear Sir, I do think these are things which, when we enter our closets to lift up our souls to God, we are all bound by sacred obligations to consider. I do not bring these as charges against you, but I speak of the impressions which your discourse has excited in the bosoms of those who espouse the sentiments which you condemn. If their impressions are without reason, the wrong may indeed fall upon them. But, in reviewing the manner in which you have treated some subjects in your sermon, is there not more reason for those impressions than Christian meekness and benevolence can approve? When the hours of excitement and the stimulus of party feeling are gone by, you and I shall stand at the bar of that Saviour who



searches the hearts and tries the reins of men. There we shall be obliged to account for the manner in which we have conducted this whole dispute.

O my dear Sir! this is no trifling matter. We are immortal beings; and our eternal destiny is in the hands of that Redeemer about whose dignity and glory we are contending.

When I think on this, I cannot but apprehend that the question between us is of deep and radical interest, as it respects our eternal salvation. If the God whom I am bound to adore has not only revealed himself in the book of nature, but has clearly disclosed his glory in the gospel of Christ, and I mistake after all a revelation so clear,—or, induced by party feeling or erroneous philosophy, reject the testimony which he has given,—the mistake must be tremendous in its consequences—the rejection will justly incur the divine displeasure. With all this subject, however, fully before me, I do not hesitate—I cannot doubt respecting it. When I behold the glory of the Saviour, as revealed in the gospel, I am constrained to cry out with the believing Apostle, “My Lord and my God!” And, when my departing spirit shall quit these mortal scenes, and wing its way to the world unknown, with my latest breath I desire to pray, as the expiring martyr did, “**LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT!**”

## APPENDIX.

---

### TWO PASSAGES ADDED BY PROFESSOR STUART,

*In a late edition of his Letters (pages 23 and 28), are introduced in this form, instead of being inserted in the body of the Work.*

By comparing the preceding paragraph (page 23) with the same in the former editions of this work, the reader will see that some of it is modified, to avoid the ambiguity which seemed to be chargeable upon the former editions,—or changed, to correct that which, if literally taken, would be erroneous. I had said that “the word *person* was introduced into the creeds of ancient times, merely as a term which would express the disagreement of Christians in general, with the reputed errors of Sabellius, and others of similar sentiments:” And although I certainly did not mean to say that such a use of it was *universal*, and *without exception*, as I well knew the phrase had been variously and loosely used by some of the Fathers, yet I prefer to remove the ambiguity of the phrase by a limitation which, so far as I have been able to examine, seems more accurately to correspond with the state of the case. My belief is, that the leading and most influential Fathers and councils of antiquity did use *person* as I have now stated.

As the text stood in former editions of this work, it would appear as if I meant to say, that the Nicene Fathers, in their Symbol, had used the word *person* in the sense alleged. This, however, I did not mean to say,—although it will appear on examination, perhaps, that I might have safely said it. I admit that my expression is of a dubious nature, or even that it will convey the sense which the Reviewer has given to it. I meant to say, that the Fathers who belonged to the Nicene Council, the divines of that age, in their writings, used the word *person* to designate a distinction in the Godhead, in opposition to the opinions of Sabellius, and others of like sentiments with him.

The Reviewer, however, in the “Christian Disciple,” in admonishing me of an error in respect to this, has perhaps himself fallen into one. He says that the Nicene Creed contains neither

the word ὑποστασις nor προσωπον; whereas, if he had read the Creed four or five lines beyond what I have quoted, he would have found it anathematizing those "who affirm that the Son is of a different *hypostasis* (ὑποστασιως) from the Father." The sense of ὑποστασις here, however, some may incline to think, is not that of *person*, but of *substance* simply. But Basil, and in like manner Bishop Bull, have contended, perhaps triumphantly, for the meaning of *person*.—Bull. Opp. p. 114, &c.

The only question of any importance at issue on the present topic is, Did the ancient Fathers use the word *person*, in respect to the Godhead, to designate beings so distinct, as to have only a *specific unity*, as the Reviewer, after Whitby and others, has asserted? or did they use it to designate a distinction in the Godhead, in opposition to sentiments like those of Sabellius, and with the acknowledgement of the *numerical unity* of the Godhead? The question, of course, is, Did the leading and most influential divines and councils maintain the one or the other of these views? If the former, then my allegation is incorrect; if the latter, then the substance of what I have hitherto said upon this subject has not been disproved.

It were easy to occupy a volume with the discussion of this subject; but my limits necessitate me to be very brief. I begin with an inquiry into the meaning of ὑποστασις.

The Antenicene Fathers used this word, perhaps, commonly in the sense of οὐσια, *substance* or *essence*. But some used it to signify *person*, or *distinction* in the Godhead. In consequence of the word being differently used by different writers, and in reference to diverse heresies, great disputes arose in the Church about it. At first, the orthodox Fathers in general strongly objected to ὑποστασις as applied to designate a distinction in the Godhead, because they averred that it meant *substance* or *essence*; and to assert that there were three substances in the Godhead, they said, was anti-scriptural. Thus Dionysius Romanus (about A. D. 250) reprobates those "who separate the Divinity into three different *hypostases*." (Advers. Saball. as cited in Athanas. Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 220.) And again, "They preach as it were three Gods, dividing the sacred Unity into three hypostases, diverse and altogether separate from each other."

So Athanasius (Epist. ad Antioch.) says, "We speak of one hypostasis,—deeming hypostasis and οὐσια, *substance*, the same."

The opposition to hypostasis, in such a sense, was general in the Latin Churches, because they translated both ὑποστασις and οὐσια *substantia*, *substance*; and they refused to say that there were *three substances* in the Godhead.

How far Origen, and others of his school, were implicated in the condemnation passed by them upon such a use of hypostasis, does not certainly appear. Origen maintains three hypostases;



but, that he asserts them in such a sense as to exclude *numerical unity* of essence and attributes in the Godhead, I have not seen satisfactorily evinced.

After the Sabellian opinions were propagated in the Church, many of the Greek Fathers maintained, in opposition to them, that there were three hypostases in the Godhead. Contentions soon arose about this phraseology, because it was deemed by some to imply too much. These contentions were in some measure composed, however, by the Synod of Alexandria (A. D. 362), at which Athanasius was present, who decided that "any one was at liberty to aver that there was but one hypostasis in the Godhead, provided the threefold distinction therein was preserved; or to maintain three hypostases, provided that only *one substance* was meant." (Hardouin, Tom. I. 734.)

About this time, in order to avoid the ambiguity of hypostasis, the Greeks began to substitute *προσωπον*, *person*, in imitation of the Latin *persona*, which was used in the Western Churches. The classical use of both the Greek and Latin word is indeed quite different from the ecclesiastical one. But *προσωπον* and *persona* evidently assumed a technical use in the Churches. After the Synod of Alexandria, the Greek Church used both *υποστασις* and *προσωπον* in the same sense—as did the Latins *persona* and *hypostasis*—in respect to the subject in question.

It remains now, after having given this sketch of the history of *υποστασις* and *προσωπον* in the Greek Church, and *persona* and *hypostasis* in the Latin, to show that a distinction in the Godhead was designated by them, which was deemed consistent with numerical unity of substance and attributes, and was not intended to designate *person* in such a sense as admitted only *specific unity*.

It will of course be seen that this question does not regard the use of *υποστασις*, in the classic sense of *substance* or *essence*,—a sense which some of the Fathers gave to it, when they affirmed that there could be but one hypostasis in the Godhead; but the use of hypostasis to designate *person* or *distinction* in the Godhead. In a word, when the Greek Fathers use hypostasis or *προσωπον*, for a distinction in the Godhead, or the Latins *persona* or *hypostasis* in the same way, do they use them so that we must fairly understand them as admitting a *numerical unity* of essence or attributes, or only a *specific unity* of the Godhead?

That a uniformity among the Fathers, in the use of these terms, existed without exception, and that no inconsistency or inaccuracy in respect to the use of them can be found, is more than any one would undertake to prove, who knows how loosely many of the Fathers have written, and how little the study of accuracy in the use of language prevailed among them. Making only proper allowances for this (allowances which must be made for modern as well as ancient times), I think it can be shown

that the view which I have given, in the paragraph of my Letters that occasioned this discussion, is substantially correct.

Tertullian, the earliest Father who presents us with the terms *person* and *Trinity* (Lib. advers. Prax. c. 2), in a passage quoted hereafter in these Letters more at length (See page 28), seems plainly to use the word *person* in the sense which I have attached to it. His antagonist Praxeas denied that there was any distinction in the Godhead, or any except a *verbal* one. "This perversity (*i. e.* of Praxeas) thinks itself," says Tertullian, "to be in possession of pure truth, while it supposes that we are to believe in one God, not otherwise than if we make the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost the self-same,—as if all were not one, while all are of one,—viz. by a *unity of substance*."

Farther on, he says, "I call him (the *Logos*) a *person*, and pay him reverence." And again, "We are baptized into the *persons* (of the Godhead) severally, by the use of their several names."

The key to this language is plainly to be found in the opinions of Praxeas, which denied any distinction in the Godhead. Tertullian means to assert it; to do which, he uses the word *person* and *persons*, while he expressly acknowledges a *unity* of substance. That this unity is *numerical*, and not *specific*, seems to me to be plainly indicated by the manner in which he expresses himself, which is equivalent to saying, "About the *unity* of the Godhead, as to *substance*, we do not dispute with Praxeas—we only maintain that there is a distinction, which we call *person*, not inconsistent with such a unity."

In regard to Origen, it has generally been thought that he maintained nothing more than a *specific* unity in the Godhead, while it is beyond a doubt that he asserts the existence of three hypostases. (See Com. in Johan. p. 24.) To ascertain in every case the exact meaning of words, in a writer who uses them so carelessly (sometimes, to appearance, inconsistently) as Origen does, would be a task difficult indeed to be performed. That he believed in the doctrine of the eternal generation and divinity of the Son, can scarcely be doubted, when the various assertions which he has made on this subject are compared together. (See Bull. opp. p. 105, &c.) That the three hypostases which he predicates of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do not imply *persons* in the sense of the word which is now common, may be inferred probably from what he says of the indivisibility of the divine nature. "God," he says, "is altogether incorruptible, and simple, and composite, *not divisible*." (Lib. iv. cont. Cels. p. 169.) Again, "The only begotten, God our Saviour, the only begotten of the Father, is son by nature, not by adoption. He is born of the mind of the Father, as the will of the mind. For the divine nature is *not divisible*, *i. e.* of the unbegotten Father,

that we should think the Son is begotten by any division or diminution of his substance." (Lib. ii. in Johan. as cited by Pamphilus in Apolog.)

While Origen, therefore, maintains the doctrine of three hypostases, or persons, he does it in such a sense as consists with the indivisibility,—i. e. the numerical unity of the Godhead. But, to explain, or to justify all his speculations about the generation of the Son, is what I shall by no means attempt.

Cyprian, contemporary with Origen, has little in his writings which concerns the present question. In his letter to Jubianus, however, after mentioning the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, he says, "These three are one;" and he afterwards speaks of Christ's "commanding to baptize into the full and one (adunata) Trinity."

Lactantius (about A. D. 300), speaking of the Father and Son, says, "To each belongs one mind, one spirit, one substance." (Lib. iv. c. 49.)

The testimonies of the Antenicene Fathers, to the eternity of the Son, may be seen in the works of Bishop Bull, above referred to; but as they have not a determinate bearing upon the point in question, I pass them over.

Omitting the minor Fathers, let us come to the Nicene Creed, the collected sense of the great body of the Church at the beginning of the fourth century. This declares the Son to be *ὁμοουσιος*, consubstantial, with the Father. Does this exclude or imply numerical unity of substance?

The meaning of the word *ὁμοουσιος* must be here investigated. Originally it was applied to things which belong to the same species or have the same nature. Thus Aristotle calls the stars *ὁμοουσια*, consubstantial; and Chrysostom (Hom. 16, in Gen.) says that Eve was consubstantial, *ὁμοουσιος*, with Adam. So the Pseudo-Justin, in opposing some of Aristotle's doctrines, says, "In respect to a rational nature, angels and demons are consubstantial."

This word, however, was so seldom used by ecclesiastical writers, before the Council of Nice, in relation to the distinction in the Godhead, that the introduction of it has (though erroneously) been ascribed to that Council. But Origen A. D. 230, Dial. cont. Marcion.) calls the *Logos* consubstantial; and Dionysius of Alexandria (A. D. 250) repeatedly uses the same appellation in respect to Christ. (Suicer in *ὁμοουσιος*.)

Eusebius of Cesarea, one of the Nicene Fathers, in addressing his Church about the Symbol of the Council of Nice, defends the use of the word consubstantial in their Creed, by saying that "he knew of some ancient, learned, and renowned doctors in the Churches who used it" (Athanas. Epist. ad Afr. T. I. p. 987.)

It would seem that, before the Council of Nice, the word *ὁμοουσιος* had already come (as it certainly afterwards did) to sig-



nify, as many used it, a *numerical unity of substance*. In such a sense, it compares with *ὁμοπατριος*, of the same Father; *ὁμογενος*, of the same nation; *ὁμοζυγος*, under the same yoke. Those who held to the doctrines of Sabellius, however, and Paul of Samosata, seem to have abused the word, in order to perplex their opponents. It was on this ground that the Council of Antioch, (A. D. 263) rejected the application of it to the Son,—not because they disbelieved, as the Reviewer would seem to intimate, the divine nature of Christ. The epistle which six leading Bishops of that Council addressed to Paul of Samosata, before his excommunication, says, “that the Son — is God, not by foreknowledge, but in substance and hypostasis — we profess and preach.” (Biblioth. max. Pat. Tom. iii. p. 349.) Athanasius, stating the reason why this Council rejected the word *ὁμοουσιος*, says that “Paul of Samosata affirmed, that if Christ were *consubstantial* with the Father, then it necessarily followed that there were three substances—one prior, and two posterior—derived from it. To avoid this sophism,” adds Athanasius, “those Fathers very properly said that Christ was not *consubstantial*,”—i. e. that the Father did not hold such a relation to the Son as Paul supposed. (Athanas. Opp. T. I. p. 919.) A similar account of the rejection of *consubstantial* by this Council is given by Basil. (Opp. T. iii. Epist. ccc.)

After all, however, it would seem that the ancient and modern writers, in their discussion of this subject, have mistaken the meaning of the Council of Antioch; and that they merely denied that Christ *κατα σαρκα*, as to his human nature, was consubstantial with the Father. (See Doed. Inst. vol. i. § 113. c., and J. W. Feverlein, de Concil. Antioch. there cited.)

Neither Athanasius nor Basil, two of the most zealous and able defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity among all the ancient Fathers, intimate, so far as I have been able to learn, the least suspicion that the Council of Antioch were Unitarians. It is very clear, from the passage above cited, that this Council believed in the divinity of Christ: and since these Fathers lived so near the time when the Council in question was held, and were so jealous as well as earnest on the subject of Christ's divinity, it scarcely admits of a doubt that the conclusion of the Reviewer, in regard to the sentiments of this Council, is erroneous.

Thus much for *ὁμοουσιος*, before the Council of Nice. In the Symbol which they drew up, the word was inserted after much discussion and consideration. Many members of the Council were afraid that the same use might be made of it which Paul of Samosata had made. It was not until “after many questions and answers, and accurate investigation of the meaning of the term,” says Eusebius, in writing an account of the Nicene Creed to his Church, “that it was admitted. Those who defended it,”

he goes on to say, "averred that it signified that the Son was of the substance of the Father, but *not a part* (or division) of the Father. To this sense," continues he, "it seemed proper we should assent." (Soc. Ecc. Hist. L. I. c. 8.)

In the same Epistle. Eusebius says, that Constantine the Emperor, who was President of the Nicene Council, replied to some of the Bishops, who made inquiry respecting the meaning of ὁμοουσιος, that "by it he did not mean that the Son was of the Father by any corporeal affections, nor by any division or separation (ἀποτομή); for it was impossible that an incorporeal, intellectual, immaterial nature, should admit of corporeal affections (*i. e.* division or separation); but the thing was to be understood of a divine and incomprehensible manner," *i. e.* manner of relation between the Father and Son.

It seems to me quite plain, that the explanations of Eusebius and Constantine, serve to show what they did *not* mean by ὁμοουσιος,—viz that they did not mean to impugn the *numerical unity* of the divine substance, as they object to all idea of *separation or division*. *Specific unity*, however, not only admits, but demands a separation, which destroys *numerical unity*.

The presumption, then, from these explanations, against the doctrine of mere specific unity being taught in the Nicene Creed, is pretty strong. It is very greatly increased, however, by the explanations which this Creed received fifty-six years afterwards, by the second ecumenical or general Council, assembled at Constantinople by order of Theodosius the Great, in order to restore peace to the Churches, which were rent by the Arian dispute, and specially to settle and establish the Nicene Symbol of faith. After meeting, and agreeing to receive and recommend the Nicene faith, with some small additions, made to oppose some new heresies which had arisen, they sent a Synodic Epistle to the Western Synod of Churches, who were to meet at Rome; in which they state that, in accordance with the Nicene Creed, and "the most ancient faith, and agreeable to baptism, they believe in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—so namely, that there is *one* divinity, power, and *substance* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; who possess equal dignity and coeternal dominion; who exist in three most perfect *hypostases*, or three perfect *persons*;—so that the pest of Sabellius shall have no place, which confounds the persons, and takes away their appropriate qualities; nor the blasphemy of the Eunomians, Arians, and opposers of the Holy Spirit prevail, which destroys the substance, and nature, and divinity, of the uncreated, consubstantial, and coeternal Trinity, by introducing a posterior nature, of a different substance, and created." (Theodoret. Ecc. Hist. L. v. c. 9.)

What in the Creed is expressed by *consubstantial*, they have here called "one (μίας) divinity, power, and substance, of the

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ;" which is a direct and (as it appears to me) unequivocal assertion of *numerical unity*, and has so been understood, as far as I have learned, in all succeeding ages of the Church. It cannot admit of a doubt, I think, that they aimed to express the *ὁμοουσιος* of the Nicene Fathers, by the *μίας ουσίας* of their Epistle; and if so, then it is clear that they interpret the Nicene Creed as teaching *numerical unity* of substance, divinity, and power, *i. e.* substance and attributes, in the Godhead.

In this ecumenical Council were one hundred and fifty orthodox Bishops assembled, besides a number who were attached to the sentiments of Macedonius. It is generally conceded that their decision gave an establishment and a uniformity to the Christian faith, about the doctrine of the Trinity, which remains, even to the present time, among the generality of Christians. This decision was so short a period after the Nicene Council, that some Bishops present at Nice, might be, and probably were still living, and not improbably present at Constantinople. At any rate, the Fathers of the Council of Constantinople can hardly be supposed to be ignorant of what the Nicene Council meant to express by *ὁμοουσιος*.

That the great body of Catholics and Protestants have maintained the *numerical unity* of the Godhead, will not, I suppose, be called in question. As little can it be called in question that the great body of them have supposed that the Council of Nice meant to assert it. This Dr. Muncher concedes, in his very able attempt to show that the Nicene Fathers meant to assert nothing more than a *specific unity* of the Godhead. (*Untersuch. über den Sinn der Nic. Glaub.*) Very few of the elder Theologians, in modern times, have called it in question, that the Nicene Creed implies *numerical unity*; and these have always been contradicted. Not only so, but some of the great masters of ecclesiastical lore have very recently avouched the opinion in question.—Schroeckh, that consummate master of Church history and patristical learning (*Kirchen Greschich.* v. 344), says, in reference to the meaning of *ὁμοουσιος* in the Nicene Creed, "*It cannot be doubted that by this word no specific unity is meant, but a numerical unity in respect to being.*" So Walch, in his celebrated *History of Heresies*, has decided (2 Th. s. 24); and Stark, in his *History of Arianism* (Berlin, 1786, 1. Th. s. 306, 307), has given the same opinion. I will not say there is no appeal from men of such distinguished learning as these; but I may say, that what they pronounce in an unqualified manner to be true, in a case which they have fully examined, when confirmed by general opinion, in all ages, and by very express and (as it seems to me) satisfactory evidence in ancient times, may at least be asserted by me, without any special rashness; and may be said to be plain from Church history.



The bearing of this investigation about *numerical unity*, as implied or excluded by *ὁμοουσιος*, upon the question how the Fathers used the word *person*, is very evident. A numerical unity being acknowledged, *person* can be used, in reference to the Godhead, by no considerate man, in the *same sense* in which it is applied to men. It designates a *distinction* in the Godhead—a *distinction*, of course, in opposition to those who maintain that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are in all respects identical, so far as they are divine. And when the Fathers use *person*, can they use it but in “opposition to Sabellians and others of similar sentiments?” Most certainly the Arians did not deny that Father and Son were two hypostases. They maintained it in such a high sense as to exclude numerical unity of substance. When the Council of Constantinople affirm, therefore, that “God exists in three most perfect hypostases or perfect persons,” they evidently mean to oppose Sabellius, as they proceed to say, “So that the pest of Sabellius shall have no place, *which confounds the persons*, and takes away their appropriate qualities—nor the blasphemy of the Eunomians, Arians, and opposers of the Holy Spirit prevail, which destroys the substance, and nature, and divinity of the uncreated, consubstantial, and coeternal Trinity, by introducing a posterior nature, of a different substance, and created.” The latter clause here is as if they had said, The Arians, &c. make two substances, natures, &c. of Christ and the Father, and the Macedonians explain away the being of the Spirit; but we maintain *numerical unity* (*μία οὐσία*) of substance or being, in opposition to these.

Such an explanation, by these Fathers, of what the Nicene Council meant to oppose, seems to me to indicate that the Reviewer is not correct when he intimates that the Nicene Fathers had not any particular reference to the errors of Sabellius. To oppose Arius was, no doubt, the *special* object of the Council. But then, in forming a creed, they naturally had reference to the disputes of the times in general. Dr. Münscher admits this. “The Nicene Council,” says he, “recognized (vorfand), as decided, the doctrine of the Church, that the Son of God is called God, and is entitled to divine honours. They recognized also the decision established in opposition to the *Noetians* and *Sabellians*, that the Son or Logos is a proper hypostasis.” (Untersuch., &c.) “Certainly, says Bishop Bull (opp. p. 114), “it is *most clearly evident* (liquidissimo constat) that the Nicene Fathers, in their creed, meant to impugn other heresies besides the Arian.” He proceeds to say what is very evident, to be sure, that many things are contained in the Creed which the Arians did not deny at all, and which must therefore refer to other sects.

I have proceeded as far in this examination as my present limits will allow. If I have justified the shape of the paragraph

which the Reviewer has animadverted upon, given in the present edition, my special object is answered by this investigation.

Be this, however, as it may, as the great body of Trinitarians, since the Council of Constantinople, to say the least, have maintained the *numerical unity* of the Godhead, and as Mr Channing cannot be supposed to have attacked the Trinitarianism of the Fathers, but of the present day,—so the substance of all that was aimed at in the paragraph of the Letters under consideration, stands unimpeached. Trinitarians of modern times, maintaining the numerical unity of the Godhead, cannot, unless Mr Channing supposes them to be most unreasonably self-contradictory, maintain that *person* does apply, or can apply, to the Godhead, in the latitude in which he understands it. The real question, therefore, as to the justice of his attack upon their opinions, is not affected by the sense in which the Fathers used the word *person*. The investigation of this question, however, may not be without some use. It may at least provoke a more diligent examination of the subject than has hitherto taken place among us. Should this be the case, the interests of truth may be promoted by it.

## POSTSCRIPT TO LETTER III.

AFTER finishing the above Letter, your "Note for the second edition" came to hand. But as it seemed to me that most which it contained had already been anticipated, I did not think it of importance to change the shape of the Letter, and adapt it to your Note as well as Sermon. I was still less inclined to this, because I had endeavoured, as far as possible, to avoid giving any personal shape to the controversy; knowing how bitter and irrelevant to the original subject, all controversies soon become, when personalities are admitted. I have not the most distant design of saying any thing with a view to wound your personal sensibility; but I do feel, and I ought to feel, a deep interest in addressing the understanding and reason of a man who, by his weight of character, sobriety of mind, and eminent talents, has acquired so much influence in society as you have. And, in order to do this with propriety, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to throw the whole subject into the shape of a discussion respecting principles; and to avoid that form of writing which too commonly involves personal reflection.

Will you now permit me, in this informal way, to add a few things which the perusal of your Note has suggested to me?

I am unable to reconcile the first passage of your Note with another in the body of your Sermon. In the former, you say, "We are told by Trinitarians that Jesus Christ is the supreme God, the same being as the Father, and that a leading end of Christianity is to reveal him in this character." In the latter you say, "According to this doctrine (*i. e.* the doctrine of the Trinity), there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator, and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here, then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed."



But how can Trinitarians maintain that Jesus Christ is the "*same being as the Father*," when a prominent trait of their doctrine is, that there is a *distinction* between him and the Father? You yourself represent them as holding this distinction to be equal to that which exists between two different men. This indeed is incorrect; but it is equally so to represent them as holding that Jesus Christ is the "*same being as the Father*," if you mean by this, *in all respects the same*.

Nor can I see the propriety of the remark in your Note, that if Christ were "the same being as the Father,.....we should expect to hear him continually spoken of as the Supreme God." For, *first*, are we to receive the Book of God as it is, or are we at liberty to insist that it must be conformed to our *expectations*? And *secondly*, if Christ was truly man (a point as certain as that Christ ever existed), and was conversant in the *human nature* with men, how, in a book which gives us the history of what he said and did during his *incarnation*, should we expect to hear him continually spoken of as the *Supreme God*? The reasonableness of such an expectation seems to be at least very questionable.

In truth, the sacred writers do not appear to me to write as controversialists on the subject of Christ's divinity. It is the way with men, who have extravagant views of the importance of any particular subject, to be ever dwelling upon it, and taking occasion to introduce it as often as possible. Thus I have heard some preachers, who will not utter a single public discourse, or offer a single prayer, without letting it be known of all men, that they are *champions* for the doctrine of the Trinity. I have heard others, who never fail to let their hearers know that they are emancipated from the thralldom of the dark ages; and have thrown off the shackles of creeds and confessions, and forms imposed by ignorant and bigoted men; that they are enlightened and *reasonable* Christians; and that their audience are bound in duty to become their imitators. The holy Apostles, however, possessed, as I must believe, none of the spirit which prompts to either of these courses. They did not view the subjects in a distorted and sectarian light. The edifice of truth—the temple of the living God—rose under their hands not only into a lofty and magnificent structure, but into one which was as conspicuous for *symmetry* as for grandeur.

All parts of Christian doctrine held their proper place in the system which they taught. Why should they then be *continually* speaking of Christ as supreme God, when (as I verily believe) they expected no professed follower of Christ to call this doctrine in question? John seems to have had opponents to it in his eye, when he wrote the first verse of his gospel; but excepting this, I do not remember another passage of the New Testament which

has this aspect of opposition to gainsayers, in regard to the divinity of Christ. The Apostles doubtless expected to be believed, when they had *once* plainly asserted any thing. That they are not, is indeed to be lamented ; but it cannot be charged to their fault. They felt (what we feel now), that very frequent, strong, and direct asseverations of any thing are apt to produce a suspicion in the mind of a hearer or reader, that the person making them has not arguments on which he relies, and so substitutes confident affirmations in their room ; or that he is himself but imperfectly satisfied with the cause which he defends ; or that he has sinister motives in view. For myself, I confess I am inclined to suspect a man of all these who makes very frequent and confident asseverations.

I am the more satisfied, then, that the New Testament treats the subject in question as one which was not controverted, and as one which was not expected to be called in question. My conclusion, from the Apostles' mode of treating it, is, I acknowledge, quite different from that which you draw, as stated in your Sermon and Notes. But, with my present views, I must think it to be more probable than yours.

In regard to what follows in your Note, most of it has been anticipated. I will touch upon only a few points.

With respect to the passages which we adduce in proof of Christ's divine nature, you observe that the "strength of the Trinitarian argument lies in those in which Jesus is called God." This may be true ; but it lies in them, as I have from the first endeavoured to show, not simply because the name *God* is given to him, but because those things are ascribed to him as God, which no being but the Supreme God can perform. *My whole argument is constructed on this ground* : Your whole Note, on the ground that we draw our conclusion simply from the fact, that the appellation *God* is given to Christ.

What you say respecting the argument in favour of Christ's divine nature, from the *name given him* in Matt. i. 23, accords in the main with my own views. To maintain that the name *Immanuel* proves the doctrine in question, is a fallacious argument ; although many Trinitarians have urged it. Jerusalem is called "Jehovah our righteousness:" Is Jerusalem therefore *divine* ?

Why should you say, in the third paragraph of your Note, that, in looking through "Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you meet with no instance in which Christ is called God ?" Are there no proofs here of his omniscience, of his omnipotence, of his authority to forgive sin, of his supreme, legislative right ? And are not these things better proof of his divine nature than a mere name can be ? Why, moreover, should such an invidious distinction be implied, to the prejudice of John's writings and of the Epistles ? Do you not admit all the New Testament to be

of divine origin and authority? Of what importance, then, is it, whether the doctrine of Christ's divinity is found in one part or another? Besides, if any disciple could know who the Lord in reality was, has any one a better claim to be considered as knowing it than John, the disciple "who leaned on Jesus' bosom?"

You have passed the whole of John i. 1, with merely commenting on the name *Θεός*. My dear Sir, can you expect to satisfy candid inquirers with this? Are you not bound to tell us how this *Logos* (*word*) could *create the worlds* (τα πάντα, the universe), before this text is disposed of? You must tell us how *creative power*—the highest, the distinguishing act of Deity, which constitutes the characteristic and prominent feature of the true God, in distinction from all false gods—(Is. xl. 26, and onward)—can be *delegated*? When you can explain this, then you will bring us upon ground where we shall be unable to controvert the Gnostics, who denied that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Supreme God. *Inferior* power, they maintained, was competent to create the world. What less do they who ascribe *creation* to Christ, and yet reject his Divinity?

Why should you pass over all that on which we rely for proof, and touch only that on which we do not profess to place confident reliance? I mean, why should you descant on the *name God*, and say nothing of the attributes and works ascribed to him who bears this name? If we should argue in the same manner with you, ought we to expect to convince you? Much less could we acquit our consciences of our obligation to represent the opinions of others fairly to the world, should we publish any thing by which we should endeavour to make them believe that *all* the evidence in favour of a particular doctrine held by many Christians consisted in that very thing *on which they did not rely*; or, at most, in that which constituted merely but a part of their grounds of belief.

The simile from Plato and Socrates, I must think, is less happily chosen than your fine taste and cultivated mind commonly lead you to choose. In the same breath that you say, "Plato was in the beginning with Socrates, and was Socrates," you add, "that whoever saw and heard Plato, saw and heard, not Plato, but Socrates, and that as long as Plato lived, Socrates lived and taught." That is, your first sentence would either be not at all understood, or understood, of course, in a sense totally different from that which you meant to convey, unless you added the commentary along with the sentence. John has indeed added a commentary; but this is, as *he means to call Christ* THE GOD WHO CREATED THE UNIVERSE. Of this commentary you have taken no notice: but of this you are bound to take notice, if you mean to convince those who differ from you, or to deal ingenuously with those whom you design to instruct.



On the texts, John xx. 28, Acts xx. 28, Rom. ix. v, 1 Tim. iii. 16, Heb. i. 6, and John v. 20, I have already said what I wish to say at present. The remarks in your Note do not seem to call for any new investigation.

You say (near the close of your Note), that you have "collected all the passages in the New Testament in which Jesus is *supposed* to be called God." The foregoing Letter, however, does represent us as *supposing* that there are *still more* in which he is called God,—although I have omitted many in which a multitude of Trinitarians have *supposed* that Christ is called God. Why should you affirm this, when nearly every book on the doctrine of the Trinity, that ever has been published by Trinitarians, will contradict it?

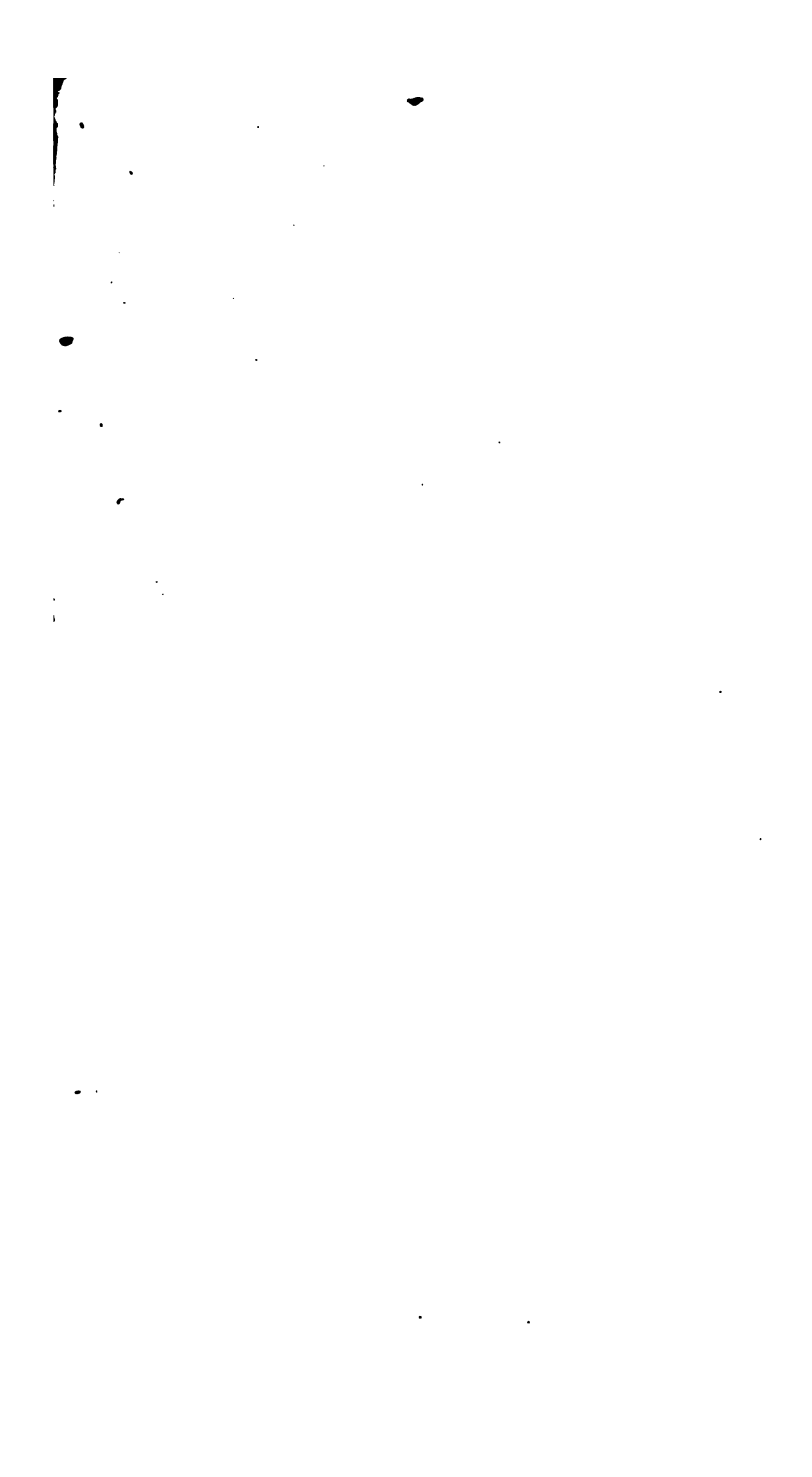
You repeat also the assertion here, "that, in two or three passages, the title (of God) may be given him (Christ); but in every case, it is given in connexions and under circumstances which imply that it is not to be received in its highest and most literal sense."

But in no single instance have you noticed the "connexions and circumstances," in which the appellation *God* is bestowed on Christ. Can you reasonably expect your thinking readers will take this assertion upon credit? Are you not bound to prove to these same readers, *by the Scriptures, interpreted according to the universal laws of explaining human language*, that the New Testament writers have not ascribed to Christ *CREATIVE power, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, divine worship, divine honours, and eternal existence*? What are names in this dispute? Show that these *attributes* are NOT ascribed to Christ, and you make us Unitarians at once. You ought not to take the advantage of representing our arguments as consisting in that on which we do not place reliance; and then intimate to your readers, "This is all which Trinitarians have to allege in their own favour." Dispute can never be terminated in this way. Meet fairly and openly the points in debate. Many of your readers are certainly too intelligent, and too conscientious, to be satisfied with any other course. Any other does not become your high character and distinguished talents.

---

**D. CHALMERS & Co. Printers,**  
**ABERDEEN.**

---





1000

1000

This book should be returned to  
the Library on or before the last date  
stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred  
by retaining it beyond the specified  
time.

Please return promptly.

~~AUG 12 1930~~

~~AUG 27 1942~~

C 1352.44.35

Letters on the trinity and on the d

Widener Library

003682891



3 2044 081 772 766